No. 687.) For Week Ending March 1st, 1902. (One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 687.] For the Week Ending March 1st, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

III.—THE SECRET EXPLOSIVE.

"I WONDER what on earth he wants?" thought Farrell.

He was looking at a telegram he held in his hand.

"*Come at once to Whitehall—important.—A.*"

Lord A. held a high position at the War Department. He had met Edward Farrell on several occasions, and knew of his high scientific attainments.

Farrell was extremely puzzled as to why Lord A —— should wish to see him.

"I suppose the quickest way to find out," continued he, "is to go and see!" so within half-an-hour he was bowling along in a swift hansom towards Whitehall.

Lord A——, a white-haired, clean-shaven aristocrat, greeted him cordially.

"My dear Farrell, I am indeed glad you have come so promptly. I have a most important task for you, if you will undertake it. There is a not inconsiderable element of danger in it, however, so I will put you in possession of a few of the facts before asking you whether you will help me or not."

"Fire away at the facts as hard as you like," Farrell replied; "only before you begin let me say that you may count definitely upon any help that is within my power to give you, danger or no danger."

"Thanks, my dear fellow, I expected you would say as much, and, as you suggest, I will fire away at facts as quickly as possible—for every hour increases the danger."

Lord A—— unlocked a safe that stood in one corner of the room, and produced from its steel-guarded interior a small square leather bag.

This he opened and disclosed to view a carefully-packed and neatly fitted square tin, which contained a brownish-looking, friable powder.

"This," said he, "I received this morning from one of my special foreign agents.

"He obtained it after much danger and at great expense from the War Laboratory of one of the great foreign Powers—never mind which just now—and immediately fled with it to me.

"It is a secret explosive of wonderful power, and it is said that the army using it will have a tremendous advantage over its foes.

"We have been trying to get a sample of it for months but without avail, its secret has been guarded too jealously.

"At last, however, we have triumphed so far that we have obtained the sample you see before you; but the difficult part is yet to come, for now it has to be examined and its composition discovered. That is the task I wish you to undertake, and had the abstraction of the explosive from the foreign laboratory been kept secret, it would not have been a very dangerous undertaking. Unfortunately, however, they discovered its loss at once. My agent had to run for his life, and only reached me after having been twice attacked on the way.

"At his suggestion I sent off this morning half-a-dozen trustworthy messengers to all our experts, with packets similar to this but containing no explosive, in the hope of putting any spies off the scent.

"It is quite likely, however, that you will be followed and watched—possibly attacked, so you quite realise the danger.

"The only way in which I can help you is to send a couple of Secret Service men to guard your house, and report anything suspicious to you while you are conducting your examination. I won't ask you whether you still agree to undertake the service, for I know what your answer will be; but I can assure you that you will

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be doing your country an invaluable service, which I shall take care to duly represent in the proper quarter. Now how long do you reckon it will be before you will be able to report to me?"

Farrell had listened with the keenest interest to Lord A——'s story, and no one looking at him could doubt whether he regretted the risk he had undertaken or not.

His tell-tale eyes were sparkling, and it was evident he looked upon his task with the greatest relish.

"Well, in the usual way it would take at least three days," he answered Lord A——; "but I intend to stick at it, without sleep, if possible, till it is finished.

"Much depends upon the material itself, of course, but I hope to have some definite result to lay before you by to-morrow evening."

Lord A—— was delighted; he had not reckoned on Farrell in vain.

"That's the sort of spirit I like," he said. "Now I will send for the men I promised you, and then I must leave you to untangle your skein alone."

The men proved to be two of the most efficient in the Service—shrewd, intelligent, and eager.

"Now; look here," said Farrell, "I suppose Lord A—— has told you all about this business, so I need not impress upon you the importance of carrying it through successfully.

"I shall take a cab from here to my laboratory and you had better follow me in another—keeping your eyes open meanwhile to see whether I am shadowed by anyone. Report to me when you arrive, and we will then take measures for the safety of the house while I am at work."

Farrell hailed a hansom outside the War Office and started for his laboratory.

He saw his two guards enter another cab about fifty yards in the rear, but though he purposely watched he did not see any other cab engaged before he turned out of Whitehall.

A motor-car suddenly turned, as it was passing, and dashed across the path of the cab.

He leant back lazily against the cushions with a look of relief on his face—the precious bag was on his knees—he would not trust it out of his hands, for he intended to run no unnecessary risks.

"And, after all," thought he, "what risk is there? the messengers that were dispatched this morning have probably put any pursuers off the track altogether, and I shall be allowed to pursue my investigations unhindered."

The more he thought of it, the more he was inclined to think that Lord A—— had magnified the danger.

"It is evident I am not followed," he thought, "or else I should have seen them engage a cab."

With this satisfying thought Farrell dismissed the danger from his mind, and settled himself to think out his line of investigation for arriving at the composition of the explosive.

He had succeeded in elaborating his scheme of analysis to his entire satisfaction and was soaring serenely in the clouds of his scientific imagination, when he was called back to earth with a rush by the violent swerving of his cab followed by the caustic and telling sarcasm of his driver.

"Garn, you bloomin' old tin ribs, why didn't yer say perlite as 'ow yer wanted to cut in 'atween my 'oss and keb?"

These words were addressed to the driver of a swift motor-car that had suddenly turned, as it was passing, and dashed across the path of the cab.

Had it not been for the ready presence of mind of Farrell's driver, the cab, Farrell saw, must inevitably have been wrecked.

The only passenger on the motor-car was a short, very broad, black-bearded individual, who was talking rapidly and excitedly to the driver, apparently urging upon him some course that was very much against his will.

As the car dashed across the front of the cab Farrell had noticed the eagerness with which this man had scanned him and his belongings and had seen with an uncomfortable start of surprise the look of fiendish delight that had flashed from his eyes as they fell upon the brown leather bag upon Farrell's knee.

With a shudder Farrell realised that this had been no accident, but a wilful attempt to wreck him. Somehow this man had discovered his secret and had even ventured to attack him in the busy streets of London in broad daylight.

What a narrow escape he had had, and he had been congratulating himself that he had no risks to run.

He had almost been caught napping; he must beware.

The motor-car disappeared round a corner ahead, but as the cab passed, Farrell could see it standing a little way down the road, evidently waiting to get behind the cab once again.

The two guards were still following him in their cab and they had evidently noticed the strange behaviour of the motor-car, for as he looked back they beckoned to him, and pointed

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frantically towards the road down which he had seen the motor-car standing.

What was he to do? Could he hope to dodge the motor-car and so keep the situation of his laboratory secret? Should he leave the cab at some corner? All sorts of plans crowded upon him at once, and the necessity for prompt decision was apparent.

All at once his face lighted up with a sudden thought.

"I wonder if I dare?" he said; then, as he further considered, he quickly decided, his face set sternly, and he muttered fiercely: "Yes, by Jove, and I'll do it, too. It's the only way."

Then aloud:

"Straight home, driver, as quickly as you can—only mind—no collisions, please."

* * * * *

The evening was closing by the time the laboratory was reached—for Farrell had not received Lord A——'s telegram until well on in the day.

The two Secret Service men entered the house about five minutes later and reported that the spy had dismissed the motor-car as soon as he had seen Farrell safely into the house, and had disappeared down one of the side streets.

"He will wait until it's dark," they said, "and will then try to enter the house."

"Do you think he will attempt to communicate with his friends?" Farrell asked.

Both the men assured Farrell that there was not the slightest fear of that.

"He is well-known to the secret service people, and has long been suspected of being in the pay of a foreign power.

"He is a desperate and dangerous man, and will try and play the game off his own bat, for success to him will mean almost certain fortune," they said.

"So much the better," said Farrell, "for he will fail, and it is safer to deal with one than a dozen."

"Now I must make all my arrangements and start on my examination, for as Lord A—— said: 'Every moment is precious.'

"If you will come with me I will show you what I want you to do."

The men saw that in Farrell they had a master mind, and wisely refrained from any futile questions or suggestions.

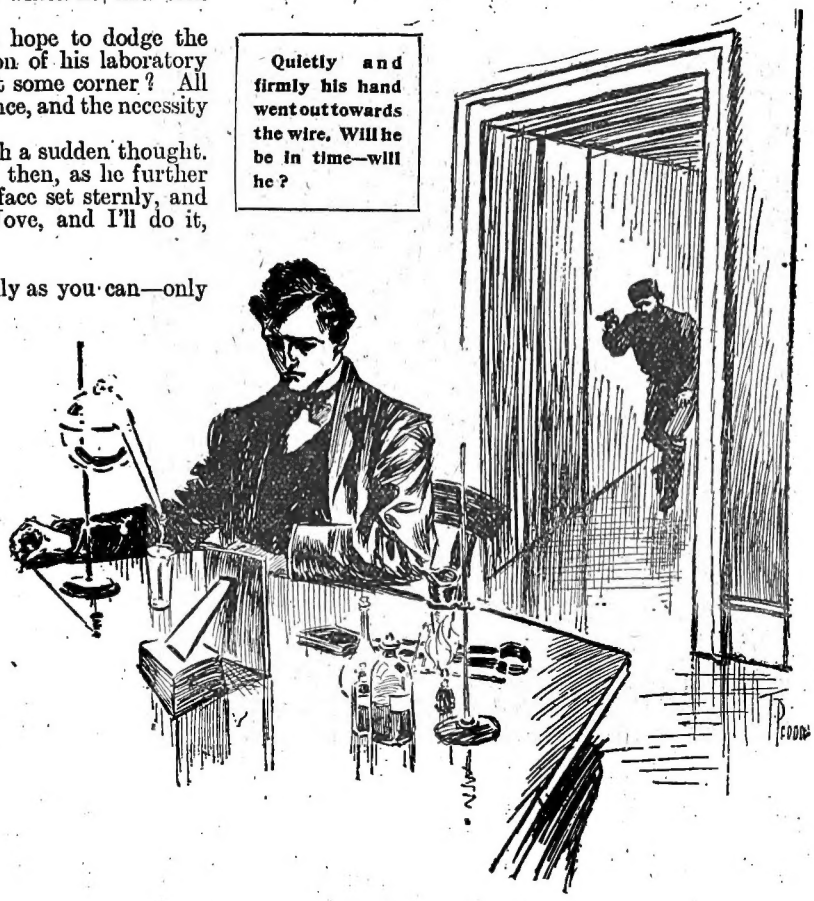
They had not been chosen for the Secret Service for nothing. They knew how to obey even if they wondered and knew not what their master had in view.

Farrell called his housekeeper, Mrs. Cook, and bade her carry some refreshments into the laboratory.

"Then you had better retire for the night, I think," said he, "for my friends and I have some important work on hand.

"Oh, and by-the-bye! do not be surprised or alarmed if you hear any very unusual sound, Mrs. Cook," added he, "for it is just possible our experiments may be noisy ones."

"All right, sir," the old housekeeper answered, and bustled away to fulfil his commands.



Quietly and firmly his hand went out towards the wire. Will he be in time—will he?

"Now we will go to the laboratory, if you please, and prepare to receive our friend the enemy."

So saying Farrell led the way to the stairs, at the foot of which he stopped again, and said to one of the men:

"You see that recess"—pointing to an opening about half-way down the hall—"I want you to conceal yourself there as completely as possible after we have made a beginning upstairs. Then you see that bell-push just at the side—it is connected to a bell in my laboratory for the convenience of Mrs. Cook; if you see or hear anyone ascend the stairs just press the button.

"I will take the bell off but will leave the indicator, so that I can be warned when the intruder is coming without letting him know that he is observed.

"Be very careful you do not let him hear you, or that will spoil all."

Then Farrell led the way to the laboratory. It was reached, after mounting the stairs, by a short corridor.

The laboratory stood parallel to the street and was separated from the house on every side, except where the corridor opened into it. The corridor ended with a double door arrangement forming a lobby, with a space of about four feet between door and door, for the prevention of draughts and the deadening of any noises that came from the house.

Edward Farrell had built his laboratory without stint

as to money, and had a good many fads of his own about the place.

Between the head of the stairs and the first door there was a switch or lever arrangement of some sort on the corridor wall that looked as though it was meant for a window opener. Farrell carefully shuttered all the windows and lit the gas. He then fetched a reel of fine wire and attached one end of the wire to the handle of this switch.

He then led the wire along the floor, through the lobby, and across the laboratory, to the side of the bench at which he intended to work, concealing it as he went as much as possible.

The bench was in a direct line with the corridor, and anyone approaching by that way could see whoever was working there quite plainly.

Farrell fetched a mirror and placed it on the bench in such a position that he could easily see down the corridor without having to look in that direction.

He next placed a large rose-spray syringe on a bench near the door and placed beside it a bottle and a beaker.

The bottle was labelled "chloroform."

The Secret Service men, who had up to then been watching and assisting as much as possible without making any comment, could not help exchanging questioning glances with each other.

What did Farrell mean to do? Surely he did not expect that a desperate man like their pursuer would allow himself to be calmly smothered with chloroform.

Farrell's manner, however, forbade questioning, and there was somehow a look of power about him that told the men that his plan was much deeper than that.

"Now," said Farrell, "I think our arrangements are about complete; we dare not waste any more time—for it is quite half-an-hour since we entered, and he may force an entry at any moment.

"We will keep all our lights going just as usual, for it will perhaps lead him to think he was not noticed, and so give him greater confidence to enter. We cannot feel safe till he is disposed of one way or the other—so the quicker we get it over the better.

"Just take a few of these refreshments, and then you"—indicating the man he had instructed at the foot of the stairs—"had better conceal yourself at your post, and wait for developments. It is now ten o'clock. He may enter at any minute, or, on the other hand, you may have to wait for hours, but you must keep a strict silence and a sharp watch, for much depends on your warning."

Then to the other man:

"You had better sit down in that corner where you cannot be seen from the corridor. Do not speak a word or make a sound, I want him to think I am quite alone."

These were strange instructions for the capture of a dangerous spy, but the men obeyed without a word, and Farrell settled himself to the task before him. Both the doors leading to the stairs were left wide open so that one could see from end to end of the corridor.

Farrell locked most of his precious explosive stuff up in his safe, leaving out only as much as he needed for his immediate purpose. First he worked at his balance, weighing off portions of the explosive, then at his bench with his beakers and chemicals, but always keeping his eye on the indicator connected with the bell-push in the hall below.

The time crept slowly by. It must have been quite an hour since Farrell had dismissed the men to their posts.

The man in the laboratory sat as though carved in stone. Not a sound came from the other part of the building to tell that any living creature was there.

Still the indicator was blank, still no sound came from any part of the house.

Had Farrell reckoned in vain? Was the spy going to leave him in peace after all? He almost hoped it might be so; and yet he knew that the secret at stake was far too great for that.

He settled himself as best he could to his task again; and, considering the strain upon him, apart from his work, progressed better than he had dared to hope.

Suddenly the indicator on the opposite wall gave a low click, and Farrell saw that the little disc had fallen.

Farrell still went on with his work as though nothing had happened, but his eyes were constantly searching the mirror to see if anyone was creeping along the corridor.

For a full minute after the warning had been given the corridor was deserted, then, at the further end, a head slowly appeared round the corner by the stairs.

Gradually the whole body made its appearance and someone commenced to slowly creep along by the side of the wall.

Farrell saw that it was the same short, black-bearded man that had been in the motor-car earlier in the evening.

In his right hand he carried a weapon of some sort.

It was certain he could see Farrell, and evidently thought him alone.

As he crept slowly on in the dim half-light of the corridor his great fear must have been that Farrell should turn and discover him.

Farrell, however, still kept on with his examination. His nerves were strained to the utmost, for he could see his foe creeping gradually nearer, and yet he dared not show that he knew it.

Nearer and nearer yet he crept. Farrell could see by the mirror that he had reached the first doorway.

Nearer still—he passed the doorway—and crouched in the space that formed the lobby; he raised his arm slowly and noiselessly, and Farrell saw that the weapon he carried was a revolver.

Now was the moment ripe for action; now he would put his plan to the test, yet he must be quick for the revolver already covered him—another step forward and it would be too late!

Quietly and firmly his hand went out toward the wire. Will he be in time—will he?

Thank Heaven, yes! A sharp, short tug, followed by a crash, and two heavy iron slides fell, one before and one behind the astonished victim.

The slides formed part of an arrangement he had fitted up for securely shutting off his laboratory from the house in case of fire and was worked like a portcullis. The whole arrangement could be liberated at a moment's notice by the lever in the corridor.

The slides were arranged with an air space between them to more effectually prevent the progress of any conflagration, and ran up and down in special grooves placed just inside each of the ordinary doors of the lobby.

Cries and shrieks of rage, oaths and curses galore came from the little space between the iron doors.

The Secret Service man jumped up from his chair and rushed forward—the whole scheme was plain to him now; he marvelled at its simplicity and its cunning effectiveness.

Farrell rushed to the chloroform, poured out about half-a-pint of it into the beaker and filled the syringe.

Then he quickly mounted a chair by the slide, opened

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a small ventilating hole at the top, poured the whole contents of his syringe upon the raving man beneath, and quickly shut the opening again.

It must have drenched the poor wretch for his fury was redoubled for a moment or two and he kicked the door in a wild madness of rage.

Soon the anaesthetic began to tell upon him, however, his cries became feebler, and at last, ceased altogether.

Farrell then directed the Secret Service man to cautiously raise the iron doors again by turning a crank at the side of the room.

As the slides gradually lifted the unfortunate spy could be seen lying senseless on the floor—a revolver still firmly grasped in his right hand, and his clothes soaked in chloroform.

They soon had him out, and—with the help of the other Secret Service man, who had been summoned from his station downstairs—bound him securely.

"Take that fellow downstairs into the kitchen," said Farrell. "You had better take it in turns to guard him until I have finished my investigation and reported to Lord A——, then we can decide what to do with him."

* * * * *

Farrell's report was eminently satisfactory, and revealed to Lord A—— and his expert advisers the key to the secret of the foreign explosive.

Lord A— was greatly pleased by the way the spy had been tricked, and insisted upon his being handed over to the tender mercies of the War Department.

Edward Farrell's services received recognition from high quarters, and he had no reason to complain of the lack of gratitude on the part of His Majesty's Government.

[Next Week: THE HIDDEN MESSAGE.]

AT HER OWN VALUATION.

"You see how exquisitely it fits, madam?"

"I see that the young lady's figure is perfect," Mrs. Alsteyn replied dryly.

Grace Williams moved up and down in front of the long mirror that the great lady might get a better effect of the garment she contemplated buying.

The compliment had not brought the faintest shade of colour to the beautiful rounded cheek. Compliments were an hourly occurrence in the life of Grace Williams, cloak model. They filled her with a slow, consuming anger that turned her life into gall and wormwood.

Why should these women who came to buy cloaks of Brown & Buxton feel at liberty to make personal comments on her appearance every hour of the day. She was there to try on cloaks, not as a target for their personalities.

She slipped the Persian lamb and sable garment from her shoulders and stood waiting for her orders to tempt the next customer. Her black satin frock, cut in the princess style, was an additional offence. Why should she be obliged to wear this hateful livery in her working hours when the only gown that her leisure hours afforded was a wretched black serge.

The tears that filled her eyes turned the electric light into dissolving rainbows that burnt and blurred the cloak department till she could see nothing.

"You won't sell many cloaks if you look like that." The voice was cheerful, even sympathetic.

"Poor girl, what's the matter, have those girls been teasing you because you're the best-looking girl in the shop? It's a shame!"

She struggled desperately to pull herself together.

"No, indeed, Mr. Brown, everyone is just as kind to me as can be. I don't know why I was so foolish."

The young proprietor looked at her kindly. "The trouble with you is, that you don't have any amusement in your life, poor girl, nothing but prance and preen in front of a mirror all day long, trying on warm coats in a warm room, and then after your day's work is done, get into a thin jacket and face the blast."

"I was thinking something of that sort when you caught me—just now."

"How would you like to go to a theatre to-night and then have a little supper afterwards?"

The girl raised a pair of frightened eyes to his. That the "young boss" as he was familiarly called, should ask any of the girls to supper was an unheard-of thing.

"I thank you, but——"

"You think it would make talk?"

"I know it."

"Confound it, Miss Williams, why should it make talk? I am a decent enough fellow, with no scandals clinging to my coat-tails; why shouldn't I take you to the theatre? The mere fact that you happen to earn your living in my shop has nothing to do with the matter."

The offer was very tempting. Grace was so tired of going home to the cold bedroom night after night—the theatre, supper afterwards, with the "young boss"—think of it—the other girls would be mad with jealousy next day—but could she stand the gossip?—surely she owed something to herself, to her honest name.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Brown, but it would not be fair to either of us. You are good enough to take me out just because you see that I need a little amusement. It would be a poor way to repay your kindness by getting you talked about."

He flushed a little and looked embarrassed. "I had not thought about it exactly in that light."

Then Miss Williams was called to try on a white ermine opera cloak. The young proprietor watched her as she walked back and forth in front of the mirror. "Oh, what a life for such a girl!" He went back to his private office, neglected all his affairs for the remainder of the afternoon and called himself names.

The gong for closing had struck, the army of *employés* were filing out. In the throng was Grace Williams, her light summer jacket buttoned up tightly about her throat. A shabby serge skirt had replaced her satin livery. She carried herself like an empress.

She followed the throng for several streets, then struck off into a side street. She mounted the steps of a shabby boarding-house. Someone was playing on a crazy piano in the dining-room and the odour of boiled cabbage rushed out to greet the weary bread-winner.

How silly she had been. Why had she not accepted his invitation.

"Miss Williams—Grace—do wait a moment." It was the young boss.

"Grace, I want you to take me at your own valuation. It's better than I deserve. Come to the theatre with me to-night as my promised wife?"

She put her little, cold, bare hand in his.

"Thank you!" was all she said. W. E. York.

STATUE or WOMAN?

Two Loves that were Lost.

YIELDING to the pressure of my friend, George Harland, I consented at last to accompany him to the home of his grandmother in Lanstone, where I had been many times invited. When we descended from the train at the station we found the old lady seated in the carriage which had come to convey us and our luggage, and beside her two young ladies, who were presented to me as:

"Miss Agnes Thomson."

"Miss Jessie Gerton."

The first, a blonde, pink and white, and very pretty, seemed the expression of gladness. Her red lips smiled, her blue eyes sparkled, and the soft little ring of hair which lay about her face blew in the wind with a sort of merriment that fitted her exactly. She was lovely, but her companion made a more striking impression on me.

Tall, slender, self-possessed, she seemed to carry a sort of majesty in her presence. Her hair and eyebrows were of an intense blackness, which heightened the delicate, though perfectly healthy, whiteness of her skin. Her features were beautiful in their regularity, and the whole face breathed a calmness which contrasted greatly with the vivacity of the girl beside her. Her eyes, of a beautiful brown, were half-hidden under long, heavily-fringed lids, which were of the same pure white as her face. As her companion seemed the spirit of gaiety, she expressed the very essence of repose.

The two girls, after having responded to my bow, turned to welcome George. Agnes, with the most perfect frankness, expressed her delight at seeing him, and shook hands vigorously; Jessie bestowed on him her hand, and, without a smile, and in the most musical voice I had ever heard, spoke a few words of conventional welcome.

When we reached the house and I found myself alone with my friend. As we changed our clothes for dinner, I asked him about the two girls.

"Agnes and Jessie have been orphans from infancy. Agnes was the child of one of my grandmother's friends, and Jessie is her grandniece and a distant cousin of mine. What do you think of Agnes?" he asked, a trifle anxiously.

"She is attractive, indeed!" I answered.

"I wanted to wait until you had seen her before telling you that I am head over ears in love with her. I mean to marry her if she will only have me."

"She is very pretty, but I must confess that the other attracted me more. I think I have fallen in love with Jessie, if it is possible to do so in twenty minutes."

George shrugged his shoulders.

"Jessie is beautiful, it is true," he said, "and possesses all the virtues on the calendar, but she is not a woman—she is a statue."

"A statue!" I repeated.

"Yes, that is what I have always called her. She is insensibility itself; she feels nothing, cares for nothing, nothing affects her cold nature. She is made of marble, and made perfectly, but she is not flesh and blood."

"Some one will breathe life into the marble some day and she will come to life," I answered.

"I doubt it," said George. "She is incapable of feeling any kind of sentiment, sorrow, joy, or love. Why, you might as well try to move a stone to pity! As far back as I can remember she has never expressed even a preference for anything. If I have asked her what we should do she has always answered, 'As you please. It makes no difference to me!' That is her whole disposition in a phrase!"

I felt that George was doing her an injustice, for in my short interview I had felt a strange sympathy with her and I knew that under that beautiful calmness lay a mine of undiscovered treasure. Oh, that my hand might be the one to bring it to the light!

As in all our rides and walks George so managed as to be the companion of Agnes, I was thrown constantly with Jessie.

She was a delightful companion so long as the conversation was of a conventional and impersonal turn, but try as I would, I could not pierce her calm; I could not know her true self. She was closed to me, her thoughts a sealed book, and I grew discouraged before her obstinate coldness.

By this time my own heart had become so involved that I could not give up trying to betray her into self-revelation. I loved her as she was—statue or woman. I watched her always, hoping always for some key to her enigmatical soul.

At last, in the most unexpected way, I found it.

One night at dinner George was telling some personal experiences with the charming manner of a good story-teller. My look left him and fell on Jessie, and I could scarcely refrain from an exclamation of surprise. Her eyes, which were usually half-hidden, were opened wide and fixed on her cousin; her cheeks glowed with a soft pink; her whole expression was one of unconscious animation that made her ten times more lovely.

I studied her face attentively. What a soft light burnt in those beautiful eyes as they gazed at George!

Suddenly Jessie turned her head as though feeling my scrutiny and our eyes met. In an instant the colour faded from her cheeks, the light in her eyes was veiled and she had become the statue again.

But I had had a glimpse of what I knew was hidden. The statue possessed flesh, blood and sentiment. I knew it now and the vision did not give me the happiness I had expected.

That evening I watched her more closely than ever. She had taken up a piece of embroidery and sat under the lamp, sewing, her hair shining in the light. George and Agnes drew softly to the long window and disappeared into the garden. The grandmother saw them, and laughed:

"There they are, running away again; those foolish children!" she said.

Jessie's head was bent so low over her work I could

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not see her face, but I saw her hands tremble so that she had to stop sewing until she regained control of them.

A statue! A fragile one, then. And George had said she could not suffer!

The grandmother retired to her room shortly, and I followed, sick at heart. Five minutes later I discovered that I had left my paper, and I returned to the salon.

Jessie was still under the lamp, but she was not sewing. Her embroidery had fallen to the floor and her head was bowed on her arms upon the table. Her shoulders were shaken by sobs.

An immense pity filled me for this woman whose sorrow had revealed her to me. I crossed the room and stood beside her. As soon as she heard me she jumped up, and would have left the room, but I said:

"Jessie, don't run away. You need not be afraid, for I have guessed everything."

She looked at me, her beautiful mouth trembling, her eyes wet, her cheeks flushed, and all her reserve broke down.

"No, you could not guess how much I love him," she said. "Ever since we were children together I have worshipped him and feared him. Now I love him with a love so strong and deep it merges everything else, and he does not suspect it. I know he calls me a statue and thinks I'm hard and cold. If I were not that way I should throw myself at his feet."

She was vibrating with emotion, making a picture so beautiful that my eyes were dazzled. And with what despair I saw her come into life!

"You will not betray me," she said, a great pleading in her voice and face. "He is going to marry Agnes, and they must never know. But I shall never love any one but him."

I took the hand she held out me, and promised to keep her secret—and my own T. H. French.

My Uncle's Test.

How a Brave Man Won a Girl.

When the dry voice of the little lawyer died away we three beneficiaries by the will stood amazed, astounded at its peculiar provisions.

My cousin, George Vardon, was the first to break the silence. "The man must have been mad," he exclaimed.

"It is such a strange will. If I understand it, his immense property is cut into halves, of which my cousin, Nora, receives one part and the other is to be divided between Mr. Harold Waring and myself," continued George Vardon.

"Quite right," assented the lawyer.

"But in the event of the death of Miss Nora Waring within one hour of the reading of this testament, the entire property is to go to found an orphan asylum; not only her portion but ours as well. In the event of the death of either Mr. Harold Waring or myself within the same time his portion is to be added to the share of Nora, and is to become hers. In case all three survive the hour, the property willed to us becomes ours unconditionally. Am I right?"

"Right again, Mr. Vardon," answered Mr. Brief, the lawyer.

"But why this absurd provision about our sudden death within the hour? I assure you"—with a nervous little laugh—"I have no immediate intention of giving up the ghost, Miss Nora looks superbly healthy, and Mr. Harold Waring is at least not an invalid."

"I can't explain the will at all. The old gentleman had queer fancies, gathered during his long sojourn in India. But you may depend upon it that he was quite sane and that the testament is absolutely valid. I drew it up myself, and there is no possible flaw in it. Let me call your attention again to another peculiar provision of the will. You three are to go at once into the blue room, close the door, and remain there fifteen minutes. You will find upon the floor a carved box, which one of you is to open. It may possibly be that in that box there may be some explanation of the terms of the will. I have the honour to wish you a very good day and long life to enjoy your property." With which Mr. Brief bowed himself out of the room.

My uncle had amassed a large property in India, where he had led a very curious life, being familiar with a very mixed company of natives and whites. His confidential valet, Lal Singh, was a man of such varied accomplishments that I never found him looking at me without feeling the creeps shiver down my back.

I, Nora Waring, was the favourite of the three kinsfolk who were left my uncle upon his return to England. He was absurdly fond of me, and in a continual fear lest I should make an unhappy marriage to some man unworthy of me. As to his nephews, who were also my cousins, I had never been able to find out whether he liked them or not. Often I had observed him looking curiously at them, and then anxiously at me, for my cousins were patiently, if not yet confessedly, admirers of mine. He was always quite civil to them both and very generous in his gifts to them, but what his secret feelings were I had never fathomed. Sometimes it had seemed to me that I had seen him chuckle when he looked at the sedate, careful George Vardon or the reckless, don't-care Harold Waring, much as if he had some surprises arranged for them in the future.

I do not know what curious fancies passed through the minds of my cousins as the automatic lock of the blue room clicked behind us, but I confess that for my part I was ready to conceive all manner of Borgia de-

vices. From the puzzled, strained look on the handsome face of George, I knew he was worrying over the situation. As for Harold Waring, he strode in with his usual easy, debonair cavalry swing, looking every inch the soldier and gentleman. I glanced swiftly from one to the other, and for the life of me I could not tell which I liked the better. Before I left the blue room fifteen minutes later I knew which I loved and which I despised.

The room was bare of all furniture, save a roll-top desk and a small table in one corner, on the top of each of which lay a cane walking-stick. The carved box mentioned in the will stood on the floor in an opposite corner.

"Let Nora open the box. It will be something for her to remember when we laugh about it in the future," suggested George.

We walked over together to the box, and I was about to turn the key when Harold Waring thrust me roughly to one side, struck by some sudden impulse of danger.

"No, no, Nora! Let me," he cried, and quickly turned the key.

The lid rose from the box before he had time to touch it, and from beneath it slid out half-a-dozen horrible flat heads and sinuous necks. I shrieked aloud in terror, and fled screaming across the room to the door. But the walls flung back my cries, and the door seemed to mock my efforts to wrench it open. I was in a palsy of agony, expecting every moment to feel the dreadful clutch of death fasten on me.

"Courage, Nora, courage! We'll win through yet, little cousin," cried a tremulous voice in my ear.

The strong arm of Harold Waring was wrapped about my waist, and I felt myself propelled towards the table. He lifted me from the ground and leapt across a reptile which barred the way. George Vardon was already cowering on the table, beside himself with terror, all manhood gone. His face was ashen grey, and his limbs shook beneath him.

"Keep back!" he cried. "There is no room for more, and I got here first. Keep back, I say!"

He seized the cane which lay on the table and struck wildly at us. Harold warded it aside and lifted me to the table.

"There's room for two," he said. "And if there were room for only one, that one should be Nora, you coward.'

"Jump, Harold!" I cried. "Jump, quick."

He leapt aside just in time to avoid the spring of the cobra. He circled round the room, jumping from side to side in his efforts to avoid the horrible death which menaced him. My heart stood still. It seemed to me that the room was filled with those ghastly erect, quivering bodies, with hooded heads, from which shot forked tongues of death, with unnatural, distended necks. I knew now who the man was that I loved, and I covered my face with my hands that I might not see him stricken down before my eyes. But the awful fascination of it was greater than my will. I had to look again. The face of Harold Waring was covered with beady perspiration, and in his eyes lurked gruesome fear.

"The cane!" he gasped, as he passed the table.

But George Vardon clung to it despairingly, imploring Waring to save him at any price, for Heaven's sake to save him.

"Oh, you coward," I flung at him. Then, with a sudden inspiration:

"The cane on the desk, Harold," I cried to him.

He reached the desk in safety, grasped the cane, and as he touched the roll-top it swung back. From the desk two more cobras slid with a dull thud to the ground. Harold Waring made his way to a corner of the room, and made a last stand with his back to the wall like a British officer.

Again and again he beat back the venomous reptiles with swift cuts of the cane, or trampled upon them with his heavy boot-heels. But the end was near, and I knew it.

I could stand it no longer. Snatching the cane from the palsied hands of George Vardon, I leapt to the ground and made across the room. I heard a curious whistle, and instantly every reptile was still. The whistle was repeated and they began to crawl towards the box whence they had come.

A panel slid aside in the wall, and Lal Singh stood smiling in the opening. He looked from one to another of us with a curious light of understanding in his eyes, as if he appreciated perfectly the part that each had played in the scene just finished. Then he came forward with his usual obsequious bow and handed me a letter.

I took it, swayed uncertainly for a moment, and pitched forward in a faint. When I came to myself Harold was bending over me with a face like chalk. Lal Singh and George Vardon stood back a little way, the one still smiling, the other with twitching limbs.

I tore open the letter and read it. The signature at the bottom was my dead uncle's.

> "Dear Nora,—There can come to a woman no greater misery than to marry the wrong man. She had better be in her grave than find that the man she has promised to love and honour is selfish and a coward. From long experience I know that it would be useless for me to tell you which of your cousins is a man and which is not, so I have arranged a little test for you to judge them by. It is at the supreme moments that there appears the difference between the coward and the brave man. For that reason I have brought you and them face to face with such a moment. If the strain has been a hard one, remember that it has been only on account of the great love I bear you, and forgive
>
> "James Waring."

I handed the letter to Harold Waring, and he read it aloud. George Vardon shrank back in shame, his breath coming in laboured gasps.

When he had finished reading my soldier cousin faced me, standing very erect, but with a countenance from which all the colour of blood had fled.

"And this—'little test'—has it availed, Nora?" he asked.

There was something in his manner that forbade me to trifle with him. "You will have but a short courtship, and a long sad mourning, Nora, for—I think I am about to die, sweetheart. I was bitten three times, and the bite of the cobra is—fatal," he told me sadly. Then, smiling a little: "You see one of us is to die within the hour after all."

"No so, sahib," interposed the soft voice of Lal Singh. "The fangs of the cobras had all been removed."

William McLeod Raine.

THE GREAT NEW SERIAL,

"LINK BY LINK,"

Starts Next Week.

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THE newspaper boys and the crossing-sweepers were unanimously of opinion that Dixon was a millionaire. They never said so to his face, of course, but they touched their hats when he came in sight, and they knew that when he gave them a penny for a halfpenny paper he would never wait for the change. Whenever he did a thing he always did it in style.

He was not exactly a millionaire, but considering the small salaries they give in the City nowadays, it is wonderful how well the junior clerks manage to dress on £25 a year. It must be remembered, moreover, that this young man was wealthier by a small farm and £500 in the bank than most of the clerks who belonged to the firm of Morris Weight and Co. Otherwise, so far as character and ability went, he was much the same as the other young men in the establishment. Theoretically speaking he should have been proportionately happier than they. Doubtless he would have been, but for a certain unfortunate peculiarity of temperament. He fell in love too easily.

Whenever Dixon found himself sufficiently interested in a girl to ask for her photograph, he immediately lost all interest in other girls, and became at once irresistibly tender, jealous, and generally foolish. He got into trouble in this way. It used to happen very often, and each time it was the most violent attack of the disease which he had ever known.

About every other week he used to fall in love with a new girl. Then he forgot his studied languor, and ran over muddy crossings when the cause of his malady approached. He practised graceful bows before the mirror, yet when she, to whom all these bows were made in imagination, stood before him, he would do nothing but speak of the pleasant weather, which was rather inappropriate when, as is usually the case in England, the sun had not seen the ground for a week.

It was at the theatre that he first met Laura Mann. Just as the maid, who was dusting furniture on the stage cried, "Here he comes at last," and flung herself quickly round, accidentally revealing a glimpse of black stockings and snowy lace with perfect success, some one asked him if he would mind moving his legs, and he looked up to see a pompous old lady, followed by the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

The seats next to him were vacant, and to his intense delight the ladies immediately proceeded to occupy them. The lively little housemaid with the black stockings no longer interested him, and his whole attention was devoted to his next-door neighbour. Once or twice he caught her looking at him out of the corners of her eyes, which were, of course, modestly dropped directly he met her gaze.

Towards the end of the second act the old lady most conveniently fainted, and Dixon after this could not very well do otherwise than volunteer to escort them home.

The following Sunday evening he called by permission, at their house in Brixton. He sang to Miss Angelina Norton's accompaniment, to the admiration of the fat old lady, whom he already regarded as his future mother-in-law. She would not have admired him, perhaps, if it had not been that she was deaf with one ear, and always sat with that ear towards the piano when Angelina's young men came in to sing.

A week later, and the little drawing-room had already begun to feel quite homelike. He was perfectly at his ease by this time, and talked as if he had been a friend of the family for at least ten years. He alluded to his country estates and to his banking account in a casual sort of way and with a shrug of his shoulders which might mean anything, and then he went away with the comfortable belief that he was making a good impression.

The following Wednesday he had three tickets given him for the dress circle of the Gaiety. He thereupon wrote to Beaumont, Mortice Avenue, Brixton, and said he was going to try and get some tickets for the theatre that night, and would they care to come with him. They understood from what he said afterwards that he had paid at least three times the ordinary amount for those seats, as there was a great run on the tickets.

On the way home he was quite sure that Miss Angelina leant up against him in the 'bus. He didn't say anything at the time, but in the hall, when the old lady had gone on ahead, she made a little exclamation, and said he mustn't think of such a thing, but he did—he kissed her.

And he went down into the street with feelings of exultation, doubt, and helplessness well-mixed and shaken together.

He was not quite sure that this kiss had not been a little premature. It was very nice, of course; but somehow or other he thought a good deal about his indiscretion, and recalled several little speeches of Angelina's, which irritated him, and made him regret that he had gone so far.

On Sunday he called again. He was reserved, almost

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cold, during the first part of the evening; but later, when they sat on the sofa together for the first time, his reserve wore away.

On all his subsequent visits they sat on the sofa.

* * * * *

The clerks in the office of Messrs. Morris, Weight and Co. were taking their holidays by turns, and early in September Dixon packed up his Gladstone bag and went down to Margate.

He found society down there very pleasant, and he had hardly been away five days before the young lady who sang on the pier usurped the place in his heart which once had been sacred to Angelina. That pretty creature's charms became dim when regarded from a distance, and although he had told her the night before he went away that Margate would be unendurable for more than a week without her; he now secretly determined to stay down there a fortnight at least. He passed a restless night, making up his mind on the subject, and he awoke with a headache. He rang the bell, and sent the waiter for a brandy and soda. He was a very abstemious youth, and it may have been that this unusual dissipation went to his head. At all events, by the time he was dressed he had fully made up his mind that he couldn't marry that shallow, ignorant girl for all the wealth of the world.

Fickle? Yes, he knew he was fickle. But it was better to draw back now, better for her—better for him, especially for him. He had never known what love was until he had seen the young lady who sang on the pier. He felt that it would be kinder to let Angelina know the truth at once. They were not suited to one another. If he did not break the engagement off, it would only lead to everlasting regrets.

On second thoughts, however, he thought that he would let the matter taper off gradually. So he made his second letter to Brixton, say, about a third as warm as the first, and said casually that he had decided to stay at Margate for the whole of the holiday.

In her reply Angelina said she did not know what she had done that he should throw her over in that disgraceful way. She supposed that he had found people down there who were more to his taste than his homely Brixton friends.

Dixon felt, as he read this letter through for the second time, that the tapering process was going to be rather abrupt. He ordered another brandy and soda and then sat down and wrote a reply at once.

He referred to the danger of making mistakes. He did not think that any man was justified in marrying a girl unless she was willing to trust him as she would trust herself; unless he was absolutely certain that he was in a position to make her happy. Both for her sake and his, but especially for hers, he thought that they had better come to a distinct understanding. It would be far wiser to deliberate calmly and carefully before taking a step which they could never recall, and might afterwards regret. There could be, he said, nothing more terrible than a life-long union of two uncongenial souls, and he begged to remain, hers faithfully, Harold Dixon.

Miss Norton's reply was brief. She saw exactly what he had in his mind, and she had placed the matter in the hands of her solicitors.

"That young woman's driving me to drink," said Dixon, as he ordered the third brandy and soda he had absolutely needed since he had been down at Margate. There was no mistaking the meaning of the letter. She was going to bring an action for breach of promise. Once more certain traits in Angelina's character recurred to him. There was no question about it—he was certain.

Yes, he reflected, she is just the girl to do it. He thought of the notoriety, of the public disgrace, the ridicule, the expense, and, as a last straw, his instant dismissal from the firm of Morris, Weight, and Co.

He had long desired to visit Ireland, and he suddenly came to the conclusion that there is no time like the present. He would go over there and stay long enough for this nonsense to blow over.

He wasn't going to pay £1,000 to a girl like Angelina, especially as he only had £500, and he immediately drew that £500 from the bank, and took the very next boat across the Irish Channel. When he arrived at Dublin, after a very rough crossing, he suddenly came to the conclusion that he would stay there permanently.

After that experience nothing would induce him to go back. This was his idea.

The next evening he was sitting in the smoking-room of a quiet commercial hotel in Dublin. It seemed to him he might well congratulate himself on having given An ina the slip, and he laughed softly to himself at the thought of the distracted solicitor arriving at Margate and finding the bird had flown.

He was still laughing when the waiter opened the door and brought in a letter addressed to him in an unknown hand. It bore the London postmark.

"Well, that's very strange," he thought to himself, as he weighed the envelope on the tip of his finger. "How in the world have they got my address? I suppose Morris and Weight's manager told them. I wish I had never met him at the station now. But I thought he could be trusted, and it seemed just as well to have someone who knows where you are. I wonder who this is from."

He tore open the letter and glanced hurriedly through it, and then he started up, with his hand pressed to his forehead.

It was from a firm of London solicitors who wrote on behalf of their client, Miss Angelina Norton, to say that the damage done to the lady's affections was estimated at £1,500. They confidently believed that Mr. Dixon could not fail to see the justice of their client's demand, and expressed a hope that he would be good enough to settle the matter without the formality of submitting the case to a jury.

"There's only one thing to do," thought Dixon, as he leant his elbow on the mantelpiece; "I must take the next train to Queenstown, and continue my travels to America. I have always had a great wish to go there. And I feel I want change of air."

The shock this letter had been to Dixon was sufficient to create a demand for brandy and soda. The waiter brought in the spirit in a tumbler and a syphon. Dixon mixed the two with very little of the syphon. Then he asked for a time-table, and discovered that the midnight train was the first that he could catch.

"I may as well stop here for dinner," he thought. Then he went upstairs and packed his bag. Having done so, it occurred to him that there were one or two things in the town it might be as well to get off his mind, and he went out and bought a tooth-brush, a sponge-bag, and a few other little articles which he had forgotten in his sudden flight from Margate.

It was eight o'clock as he once more reached the hotel, and he went at once into the dining-room. His appetite had sadly diminished since the receipt of that letter, and whenever the door opened he started nervously. He wished he was safely on his way to America, or that he had never quarrelled with Angelina. He did not much

care which; but his situation in Dublin was embarrassing. At ten o'clock the passengers from the afternoon boat arrived.

The landlord bustled about shouting directions to the waiters, hanging up overcoats, and welcoming his old friends among the commercial travellers.

"Supper is ready, gentlemen," he called out in his cheery voice, and they all trooped out of the hall into the coffee-room.

All except one. He was a little man, small and thin, with a red moustache, and sandy hair of a peculiarly sickly shade. His eyes were hidden beneath immense eyebrows, and his shoulders were stooped forward.

"Do you know what time the train to Queenstown goes?" he said, holding out his hand to the fire, and addressing himself to Dixon.

Dixon was sitting with the fatal letter on his lap, rolling a cigar in his mouth. He was in no mood for conversation, and he was quite unconscious of the stare he fixed upon his interlocutor, who was rubbing his hands nervously.

"At midnight," he said shortly.

The little man seemed disquieted by Dixon's steady stare, and he shifted from one leg to the other. He dropped his eyes, and they fell upon the envelope which Dixon had allowed to fall to the ground. He started when he saw it and changed colour. Then he seated himself in a chair, placing his little black bag between his feet, as if he were frightened of forgetting it, while he cast frequent glances at Dixon from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"I wonder what the dickens that fellow's staring at me for," thought Dixon, when at last he became conscious of the fact that every movement was being watched by the weird specimen of humanity in the opposite chair. He felt nervous and irritated, but for some time his thoughts were too busy with his plans for escape even to ask himself why.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in his chair.

A cold shiver ran down his back and seemed to settle in the calves of his legs, leaving them clammy and moist.

"By Jove," he thought, "that man's a detective."

When he came to look at it there was no mistaking that flimsy disguise. The moustache did not always move in exact time with the upper lip, and the whiskers shifted with the man's ears, and not with his jaws.

At that moment the landlord returned from the coffee-room, and Dixon turned to him as to an old friend. He felt safer in the presence of a third party.

"Won't you have any supper, sir?" said mine host, with a bow towards the stranger.

The little man passed the back of his hand nervously across his mouth.

"No thank you," he said, keeping his eyes fixed on Dixon. "I'll stop here, if you don't mind. It's not winter yet, I know, but I'm glad you've got a fire," and he shivered.

Dixon thought he would try a bit of bluff. "Make out my bill," he ejaculated, turning to the proprietor, "I shall be going on early to-morrow."

Mine host turned towards his desk, and as he did so he stooped down leisurely and picked up an evening paper which one of the travellers had dropped.

"Hullo," he said, "another bank cashier gone wrong. Got away with his money, too."

"What's that?" said the little shrivelled-up man, looking up quickly.

The proprietor finished up the paragraph before he answered.

"Head cashier of the Anglo-American Joint Stock Company," he replied. "Gone off with £50,000 and the detectives can't trace him. They never can," and he laughed softly to himself as a man who has a notion he could do the work of the Scotland Yard officials a good deal better than they seem to.

"Can't they?" said Dixon. He was thinking of his own case, and he carefully avoided looking in the direction of the little man opposite, lest he should see a malicious gleam of triumph.

"Do you think he won't get away, then?" queried the stranger, and the leather of his chair creaked as he bent forward.

"I'm certain of it," said Dixon. "The law never yet failed to ferret out a runaway."

He was still thinking of his own case and he groaned inwardly. The little man opposite groaned too, only it was audible in his case, and involuntary.

Dixon looked up suddenly.

"That man's a good actor," he thought to himself. "If I didn't know about these things I should never have guessed he was a detective. It was an unnecessary expense sending him over here, but I suppose they guessed I should go on to America when I got as far as this. I hope he won't arrest me publicly. I think I'd better let him see I am going back like a man. So," he added aloud, "the letter got here before you, eh?"

He was looking at the stranger. The little man fidgeted uneasily, and the leather of his chair creaked again.

"I'd like a word with you in a private room, sir," he said, with a meaning glance.

Dixon nodded. He was grateful to the man for his thoughtfulness. Certainly mine host suspected nothing.

In another moment the proprietor had shown them into a private sitting-room. There was a good deal of dust on the chairs, and the whole apartment wore a gloomy and uninhabited aspect.

Both men shivered.

They drew up two chairs to the table, and the little man laid his bag down in front of him.

"Well," said Dixon, "I was about right when I said it was impossible for a man to get out of the reach of the law, eh?" and he laughed nervously.

The little man beat his hand on the table. Then he pushed back his chair.

"You don't look like a hard-hearted man," he said.

Dixon flushed slightly.

"I'm not exactly," he explained, thinking of Angelina and the young lady who sang on the Margate pier.

The stranger rose and paced up and down the room. He was on the other side of the table when he stopped suddenly and faced Dixon.

"Tell me," he said, and his face looked almost haggard, "are you married? Have you a wife you love, and children who call you daddy, and put their soft little arms round your neck and kiss you?" A dry sob choked the stranger, and he began walking up and down again, to and fro, between the fireplace and the window.

At last he stopped and drew the blinds aside. He pressed his forehead against the glass and looked out with unseeing eyes.

"Tell me," he said, turning round suddenly, "how would you like to go to prison? How would you like to lie on a bed of straw, and think of those dear ones at home praying for you and starving, starving, starving, while you served your term of imprisonment? How would you like it?" he repeated, coming up to the table

and bringing his hand down with a thump that nearly started the life out of Dixon.

That young man had been at first mystified by the stranger's earnestness and deep agitation, but he found himself growing hotter and hotter at these insinuations. He had no idea it was a question of imprisonment, and what were these false charges of marriage someone was bringing against him? He may have fallen, but he had not sinned. He was indignant that any one should even suppose that he had been a husband and a father when he had been courting Angelina. He got up and stood facing the stranger.

"How dare you insult me," he began; but the little man interrupted him.

His face wore a far-away expression, and he evidently had not heard what Dixon said.

"Look here," he whispered, "I don't want to give you unnecessary trouble. What I want to know is this: Can anything in the world induce you to go back to England alone and at once, without saying a word about seeing me?"

Dixon said afterwards you could have knocked him down with a feather. Then with his usual penetration he saw through the mystery. The detective they had sent after him wanted to go after the bank robber. It was a bigger job, with more attaching to it, more fame and a greater reward.

The idea of being left to go back to England by himself pleased him mightily. He would take the trip *viâ* America.

"I am quite willing to go back alone," he said.

There was a knock at the door.

"If any gentlemen are going by the midnight mail," the proprietor said, putting his head in, "the 'bus starts in ten minutes."

The stranger looked at Dixon, and Dixon looked at the stranger, and they both looked on the floor.

"Well," said the little man, "it rests with you whether I go by the midnight train or not. Can you be trusted?"

Dixon held out his hand.

"I'll never breathe a word of this meeting," he said, fervently. He had never expected that things would turn out so well as this.

The little man opened his bag and took out a roll of papers. He thrust them into Dixon's hand, and then went out hurriedly. Dixon has never seen him again to this day, and he never wants to.

"This is the summons and other interesting legal documents, I suppose," he said to himself. "What an ass that detective must be," he went on throwing the bundle down on the table unopened. "I wonder whether he really thinks I am going quietly back to England."

Another drink seemed more in his line just then, and he ordered a brandy and soda.

"It's all Angelina's fault," he said to himself apologetically, when the waiter brought in the refreshments.

How long he sat in that room he did not know. The sudden fright and the merciful escape had upset his nerves.

Then he stretched out his hand and carelessly opened the roll of papers.

They rustled as he spread them out, and his heart suddenly jumped into his mouth.

Bank notes for £10,000!

"Horace Dixon you're an ass!" he said to himself, and then he rang the bell for brandy. "You might bring in two, I think," he said to the waiter, and he drank them both down, one after the other.

He saw it all now. The little man was the bank cashier, who had mistaken him for a detective, and this was his bribe, £10,000, to say nothing about the meeting. He felt he ought to laugh, but his throat was dry, and his head burning.

* * * * *

Two days later he called upon the firm of London solicitors, and paid the £1,500 down without a murmur. It was an easy way of getting out of the difficulty. His conscience smote him, it is true, for he felt in a way that the money belonged to the bank; but after all it had been obtained honestly enough, and the balance would do nicely for setting up house with the girl on the Margate pier.

The next day they arrested him for complicity in the great bank robbery, and he is still trying to make the authorities believe his story. Angelina has been arrested, too, but there is every chance of their getting off. The fright will do them both good probably, and at all events Dixon will be cured of falling in love too easily.

All That Was Left.

"Professor, what has become of Tom Appleton? Wasn't he studying with the class last year?" "Ah, yes, Appleton—poor fellow. A fine student, but absent-minded in the use of chemicals—very. That discolouration on the ceiling. Notice it?" "Yes." "That's he." "I'm not surprised. I always thought Tom would make his mark if he got a chance."

What He Wanted.

The young man's face was flushed, and his manner was strangely agitated. As he addressed the fair girl before whom he stood, a faint tremor was noticeable in his voice. "Miss Blanche," he said, "I hesitated about coming to you, but my feelings have overpowered me at last. Will it be too much for me to ask——" "Pray go on," said the maiden, with heart wildly beating, as his face faltered. Yes, they were coming, the words that she and her dear mamma had so long waited for. "Pray go on," she said again, as he stood looking at her with burning eyes. "I came to ask you, Miss Blanche——" "Yes," she smiled encouragingly. "If it would be too much trouble for you to write off that recipe which you said you had for warding off indigestion. I'm sure I'm going to have it, and those confounded doctors always charge so much for a prescription."

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL.

"Link by Link."

THE UNRAVELLING OF A DEEP MYSTERY.

Starts Next Week.

A Strange Weapon.

We had finished dinner and settled ourselves on either side of the fire to smoke and talk. After some time the conversation turned to the subject of valuables and I asked my host which of his many possessions he most valued. He shut his eyes and leant lazily back in his chair as if thinking deeply.

"I never really thought much about it," he said at last. "There are two or three things I value very highly, but perhaps, of all my possessions, a curious weapon which was the means of saving me in what might easily have been a very nasty experience some years ago is most worthy of my regard. From a monetary point of view it is worth practically nothing, but if I had not chanced to have it with me on the occasion of which I speak, things might have gone badly with me and with Minnie too, for the matter of that." Minnie was his wife and was staying with friends.

My curiosity was excited. I had never known John Harpenden had been in any particularly dangerous predicament and I said so.

"No, I daresay you didn't hear of it," he replied, "but if you like I'll tell you the story now and also show you the weapon. Or suppose you try and guess what it is. I'll give you three guesses, though I don't suppose you would find it out in thirty."

I suggested the first weapon that occurred to me, a revolver.

He smiled indulgently and shook his head. "Nothing so hackneyed as that, my friend."

"A dagger?"

"No."

As the mention of legitimate weapons seemed only to amuse him I spent my third guess in suggesting that the weapon might be a walking-stick.

Harpenden laughed and rose from his chair. "No one has ever guessed," he said as he opened a small cabinet, took out a wooden box and put it on the table before me. With great solemnity he raised the lid and lifted out—a patent leather shoe, a new, shining, lady's little evening shoe, with a high heel and neat little silver buckle.

I stared speechless. Surely Harpenden was joking.

"You look mystified," he observed complacently, "and if I may say so, rather sceptical. But wait till you hear my story. One December night several years ago Minnie and I went out to dinner with some friends.

"We were then living at Thornfield which as you know is quite in the country, and the friends with whom we were to dine occupied a house about a mile away. Well, Minnie (though the sweetest little woman in the world) is like the rest of her sex in wanting to show off her belongings, so, though the dinner was no very big affair she put on all her warpaint, including the diamond necklace which was left to her by her old godmother and which is very valuable. Our village only boasted one cab in which we drove to the Elmers (our friends) and I told the man to call for us again at eleven o'clock.

"However, he never came at that time nor, though we waited and waited till nearly mid-night. Mrs. Elmer wanted us to stay the night and I suggested that I should go and hunt for the missing cab and bring it back for Minnie. However she decided that the simplest thing to do would be for both of us to walk home.

"It was a lovely moonlight night, and the distance was nothing to speak of. Elmer and a friend who was staying with him offered to escort us, but we refused the offer. We knew the way perfectly and had no fear Minnie wrapped herself up and we started.

"Just about half-way, there was a particularly lonely little piece of lane with a hedge on either side. The lane led through a wood on the other side of which was our house. Just as we reached the entrance of the wood two men seemed to grow up out of the ground before us.

"As a matter of fact they had really been crouching in the hedge and we did not see them till they stepped in front of us. They had on masks and of course we both knew in a moment what they wanted, Minnie's necklace and any odd trifles such as my watch and her rings and bracelets besides.

"We found afterwards that they were a gang of three. The third had engaged the solitary cab on a fictitious errand and so arranged that it was impossible for it to return to the village in time to call for us. They knew of course that Minnie would wear her diamond necklace and they imagined that to ask for it would be to get it from a woman and one unarmed man. But they were a little out of their reckoning.

"Though I say it myself, I am no coward, and, unarmed as I was, I determined to fight for the diamonds in spite of the assurance of one of the robbers that they would not hurt us if we made no resistance. Almost unconsciously I put my hand in my pocket for a weapon and there I felt Minnie's shoes which I was carrying for her. I thought that a blow with the sharp heel would probably be more efficacious than one with my fist and I put out my hand calling 'Keep off!'

"To my utmost amazement both men stopped dead, they stared at my hand as if fascinated, then simultaneously muttering, 'He's armed!' they turned and made off as fast as they could.

"They were very raw highwaymen no doubt, but things might have been very nasty for us, had it not been for the shoe. In a second the reason of their terror dawned upon me. As I said, it was a moonlight night, and the moon shining upon the patent-leather shoe gave it in some inexplicable way, the appearance of a revolver, the glint of the silver buckle helping the illusion.

"They did not wait to investigate it; so far as their eyes could tell, a revolver was levelled at them and they thought flight their safest course. But ill-luck attended them. They ran straight into the arms of some workmen returning from the village and a little time afterwards I had the satisfaction of hearing them sentenced to a term of imprisonment. And now you know why I value this strange weapon."

Claudia Ashton.

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CATS AND DOGS.

The Winning of the Dean's Daughter.

THE dean's cheeks are flushed a deep red beneath the eyes; the rest of his face is shaded with a stiff grey stubble of twenty-four hours' growth. It is not, if the truth be known, the healthy glow of sleep which has caused that sudden colouring, so conspicuous by its contrast with the immaculate, tasselled night-cap, and the snowy bed-clothes. Those widening circles, as the vergers and choristers have good cause to know, are the finger-marks of a dangerous and exceedingly irritable temper.

Annoyance, perhaps, was excusable under the circumstances. The dean was a man whose movements for the last twenty-five years had been regulated with clock-like precision. It was his habit to read prayers every night at a quarter to ten and after embracing his daughter to turn out the great brass lamp in the hall, and to reach his bedroom just as the cathedral bells chimed that hour.

Once in bed, it was his intention and his custom to sleep until the gentle insinuating clatter of his man-servant with the shaving water and the shutters enticed him almost unconsciously from the infinite realms of dreamland on the stroke of half-past eight.

It is now only six, and his slumbers have been rudely disturbed.

He sits up in bed and rubs his eyes. He hears nothing but the shrill chattering of the sparrows playing and quarrelling among themselves in the variegated ivy which covers the whole side of the Deanery, mingled with china-roses and masses of yellow jasmine.

"I'm sure I heard something," he says, catching sight of himself in the long mirror in the wardrobe, and adjusting his night cap.

However, the cause of his disturbance, whatever it may have been, is hushed, and with a sigh of intense vexation, which is the synonym of an oath in the dean's vocabulary, he settles himself down again and pulls the blankets more closely round him to repulse the fresh morning air which is creeping into his warm bed, and insinuating itself in a most aggressive way between his shoulder blades.

His regular breathing tells that he is once more asleep, when the same shrill wail of agony which had startled him before floats in through the half-open window.

In a moment the dean is out of bed and paddling across the polished boards with naked feet. The circles below his eyes are burning brightly, and his whole face wears an expression of extreme earnestness. The boards are very cold, and the dean, remembering a trick of his youthful days, snatches a bath towel from the washing-stand and throwing it on the ground, shuffles along on this moving carpet to the window.

It is a beautiful summer's morning, and outside everything is bathed in sunshine.

On the right a well-kept lawn of velvety turf slopes down to the grey old cathedral walls, and on the other a thick shrubbery, broken here and there with a border of gaily painted flowers, half hides the tall green fence which divided the dean's garden from the bishop's palace.

Immediately in front the broad gravel path which diverges at the basin of the fountain, and comes together on the farther side, leads down to the little gate in the iron railing which is the boundary of his lordship's park.

The dean from his window can see nearly three miles across this gently undulating pasture-land, here rolling a great bank towards the early sun until every dew-bathed blade of grass is silvered, and there sloping gently backwards towards the west in solemn shade, clothed with huge beds of bracken and stunted undergrowth.

Here and there some magnificent forest tree stands out in solitary grandeur, its lower branches trimmed with absolute exactness where the deer have nibbled, while on the crest of the farthest hill the sun is already throwing shadows through a cluster of hoary oaks which wave their gnarled branches in a soft midsummer breeze, and suggest further scenes of sylvan beauty down in the miniature valley below.

The dean has already expressed his belief that there is a time for everything. Standing on a damp towel at the open window, shielded only by a fluttering night-shirt and a cap, he does not see his way to bestowing even one thought on the glories of that early morning scene, and his whole attention is concentrated on an effort to trace the unearthly sounds which are disturbing the pleasant hours of his well-earned rest.

It is not long before he recognises in those agonised cries the voice of Beetle, his daughter's favourite cat. As the cause of all this commotion is invisible, most men would have contented themselves with throwing a boot into the bushes and, having called down a few maledictions on the head of the unfortunate creature, would have crept back into bed.

The dean, however, had not left his warm couch for nothing, and he does not intend to get back again until the cause of his disturbance has been removed. He is fully conscious of the fact that such an exceedingly well-behaved cat as Beetle would never be making all that noise unless she had some very good and excellent reason, and he therefore peers about in all directions to discover where she may be hidden, and, if possible,

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the circumstances which are converting the serene old tabby into a public nuisance.

It was not long before he had solved the problem. At the farther end of the shrubbery, half-hidden behind a clump of lilacs, there is a straw-thatched summer-house, and through the mullioned window he can, by standing on tip-toe and straining his neck, just make out the outline of a boy in a red and white blazer and a straw hat.

"Ha, ha!" he mutters to himself; "the bishop's boy again! Wait a minute, my young friend; wait a minute!"

In a second he is slipping on his trousers, and there is a gleam of satisfaction in his eye, which can hardly be accounted for merely by the pleasure of getting up in the early hours of the morning to punish an erring schoolboy.

This is by no means the first time that he has discovered the bishop's boy climbing over that green fence for the sake of victimising Beetle. On three occasions he has remonstrated with his lordship, and each time he has been snubbed—once in the presence of all the Chapter.

The bishop had raised his hands in pious horror. One of his boys treating an animal cruelly! The idea was preposterous. The dean must be mistaken. The dean ventured to maintain that he knew what he was talking about, and the bishop had retorted that such a suggestion amounted to a personal rebuke for not having brought up his children as they ought to have been brought up.

The bishop was rather a quick-tempered man, and, annoyed at what he considered unwarrantable interference on the part of the dean, he had even gone so far as to hint that before preaching to other fathers about the management of their children, it would perhaps be just as well if he turned his attention to his own home. A smile had gone round the Chapter-room at this sally, for the dean's daughter had a reputation in the neighbourhood for being a desperate flirt, and for having broken the hearts of all the curates attached to the cathedral.

This accounted for the lines of exultation which hovered round the dean's stern mouth as he put on his shoes and then unhooked the strap from the wall, which hung there for the sole purpose of putting a keen edge on his razor.

"I'll make that boy's sitting-places an abhorrence to him," he chortles to himself. "I will brand him this time, and the bishop shall see the marks and apologise. I will take down his lordship's pride in these boys who spend their holidays breaking down my fences, robbing my fruit trees, plundering my garden, and teasing my daughter's cat. They may be the sons of the bishop, but they're worse than the village boys," and the circles on the dean's face grow larger as he pushes open his bedroom door and slips noiselessly down the stairs.

The grass is soaking wet, and his bedroom slippers are not waterproof, but in the excitement of the chase the dean prefers to run the risk of rheumatism to the chance of warning the boy of his approach by walking on the gravel.

He dodges mysteriously from tree to tree and from shrub to shrub, occasionally standing still or crouching down to listen intently, and all the time caressing the strap with a loving hand. Finally he disappears into the bushes, breaking thousands of fairy barriers, woven in silver gossamer from leaf to leaf, and bringing down a whole shower of dewdrops in his path.

As he does so a disinterested spectator might have noticed a small boy with a very scared face, in a red and white blazer and a straw hat, hastily clambering over the green paling into the bishop's garden.

At last the dean arrives at the door of the summer-house, soaked to the skin, and shivering with the cold, and as he creeps in with a self-satisfied chuckle he finds himself face to face with Beetle, tied hand and foot, and lying on her side.

"Confound it," he says, "the boy has gone after all. Oh! if I had only caught him," and the strap swishes through the air and whistles threateningly.

In the meantime there is nothing for it but to release the poor cat, which had apparently been playing the part of prisoner in some wild Indian game, and judging from her scared appearance, was momentarily expecting to be scalped, and having done this to let himself into the house again, and dawdle over his dressing until the breakfast bell rings.

The breakfast-room at the Deanery is quite the most charming in the house, and its broad windows, with the deep cushioned seats, look out over the same expanse of lawn and pasture-land as the dean's bedroom. In

The door opens, and Lilian comes in, dressed in her riding habit.

the morning it gets the full benefit of all the sunshine, and more than once on Christmas Day the dean has sat with his back to the open window while his daughter has poured out his coffee from behind the great hissing silver urn.

This morning he is down first, which is hardly surprising, as for the last hour he has been doing nothing but wait for the sound of the gong. He stands for a few minutes watching the gardener sharpening his scythe with long musical sweeps of the rubber, and then he turns and carelessly takes up a pile of letters. The first four are addressed to his daughter, they are bulky and bilious, and the last is in the well-known handwriting of an old college friend.

He tears open the seal with unusual eagerness, and takes a hasty glance at the letter before he sits down at the table to read it carefully. Evidently it gives him satisfaction.

It has long been his secret and cherished wish that his daughter should marry the only son of this old friend of his boyhood days, although the two young people have never seen one another. At last he found courage to broach this delicate subject to his friend, and the answer is that Captain Fairley will be most charmed to accept the dean's kind invitation and to spend a week with his father's friend, of whom he has heard so much. There is a postscript, however, which for a moment threatens to bring out those red circles under the dean's eyes.

Captain Fairley wants to know if he may bring his terrier with him. He has heard of Lilian's attachment to her cat, and therefore he is all the more confident that his friendship for his dog will be appreciated by the dean. The two are never out of one another's sight for long.

The dean passes his hand across his forehead with a gesture of impatience and annoyance. He foresees that it is more than possible that all his carefully-laid plans may be frustrated by this innocent request which he cannot very well refuse.

"It's enough to turn Lilian against the man right away," he thinks. "There will be a fight between those two pets as sure as I am sitting here, and if Beetle is hurt, the child will never forgive me or Captain Fairley either. However, I suppose it can't be helped. I must warn her—no, on second thoughts, I don't think I will. It will be wisest to abstain from any reference to such an unpleasant subject. Ah, here she comes."

As he speaks the door opens, and Lilian comes in, dressed in her riding habit, and with a black straw hat tilted jauntily on the back of her head. She runs across the room and entwines her arms lovingly round his neck. She is a daughter of whom any father might be proud, and the dean may be pardoned for holding her at arms' length and gazing at her for fully a minute with a passionate admiration before he releases her.

Her hair is brown and wavy, her features small and regular, and when at rest they have a demure way of looking serious and motherly. It is only when she smiles, which she does at the smallest provocation, that her large grey eyes light up with roguish merriment, and she looks the very incarnation of the mischievous beauty which she is.

The morning greeting over, Lilian takes her place at the head of the table, and, all unconscious of the little conspiracy which her father's active brain has been concocting, she busies herself in the most matter-of-fact way with the cups and saucers.

Beetle sits herself on a high-backed chair by the side of her young mistress, and smacks her lips as she watches the cream poured out. She seems sublimely indifferent to the perils through which she has passed that morning, or else she is sharing the dean's anxiety that Lilian may be spared the pain of hearing anything about the discreditable adventure.

The dean is a man of immense tact, he is anxious to tell Lilian of to-morrow's visitor, and at the same time to avoid the slightest chance of her suspicions being aroused, or even put on the alert. He is perfectly aware of the fact that he has only to let her suppose that Captain Fairley is coming down with the intention of winning her affections, to remove the remotest chance of the ultimate union between them, which at this moment is the dearest project of his heart. If there is one thing to bring a high-spirited girl to open rebellion it is having a lover thrust upon her.

"Lilian, my dear," he says at last, laying down the paper and drawing his coffee a little nearer to him, "I hear this morning that the son of a very dear friend is coming down here to-morrow for a few days on—er—on business, my dear."

"On business, papa?"

The dean is a little ruffled at her tone of absolute incredulity.

"My dear," he says, "please don't emphasise your words in that way as if you considered it ridiculously impossible for your father to have such weighty matters as business to attend to."

"Is he good-looking, papa?" Lilian asks, slyly turning the subject.

The dean sees his opportunity, and does not hesitate to make full use of it.

"There you go at once," he exclaims, and then stops with well-feigned embarrassment, while Lilian raises her eyebrows in surprise.

"Little one," he goes on, after a moment's pause, during which he determines on a bold policy, "little one, you won't be angry with your father if he warns you against the dangers of flirting, especially with men like Captain Fairley. For all I know he may be engaged; a popular man like that is sure to be, and I would not have you losing your heart to him. If I were you I should see as little of him alone as you can. You understand, my dear, let your position as hostess be clearly understood."

The dean watches his daughter's face closely, and notes with much inward satisfaction that the bait has been swallowed. Woman-like, Lilian's interest and curiosity have been aroused, and she is secretly determining to make the most of the captain during his short visit, and exulting in the thought of meeting someone really worthy of her arts.

* * * * * *

Captain Fairley has not been in the house many hours before the dean has the gratification of finding that the two young people get on most admirably together, and especially when he is out of the room or pretending to be deeply engrossed in sermon-writing, which is always a good sign.

Only one thing now remains to make him the happiest man on earth, and that is one more opportunity for wiping off his old score with the bishop. He is more annoyed than he likes to confess at having been led on that wild goose chase after the boy in the red and white blazer, and the deliberate way in which the bishop has ridiculed his charges still rankles very bitterly with him.

He has taken to waking up at all sorts of unearthly hours in the morning, and lying in wait at his bedroom window in the hopes of once more catching that little

rascal in the garden, and he is quite sure that he shan't escape a second time. Ah! to take that saintly boy by the wrist and lead him round to the palace would be very sweet. The bishop would have to apologise, and that would be even sweeter.

However, just for a few days he would be glad if even this happiness might be withheld. His conscience tells him that the bishop's sarcastic suggestion that he should look to his own home would have a special significance now, and much of the polish would be taken off the score if the bishop, after confessing that his faith in his own parental training had been shaken, could turn round and accuse the dean of actually encouraging his daughter in her forward ways, and even of importing a young man into the house for the purpose of carrying her off.

The dean is, if the truth be known, rather ashamed at having done so himself, and the bishop's taunt, if he guessed the truth, would be very bitter.

He takes the precaution of hinting to the bishop and his clergy, that Captain Fairley has come down on matters solely connected with business, and he determines that, whatever happens, they shall have no opportunity for guessing the truth.

On the last day of the captain's visit he has invited half the county to dinner to meet the bishop, and on the previous evening he follows Lilian to her bedroom, a very unusual occurrence.

Having played the part of a social hypocrite before, he has to stoop to mask himself again, and after gently reproving Lilian for the evident attachment which has sprung up between her and the captain in spite of his warning, he goes on to guard her against giving her guests the smallest opportunity for even guessing at the true state of affairs. He points out that until the captain has made a definite proposal, he would not for all the world have their names connected together, and Lilian promises to be on her very best behaviour.

Truth to tell the captain has fallen head over ears in love with the dean's daughter; he is fascinated by her beauty, enchanted by her vivacious manner.

Until his first appearance in the Deanery drawing-room, he had not the least idea why his father insisted upon his paying this visit to the dean, whom he knew little more than by sight; but when the truth dawned upon him that he had been sent down to this provincial town for the sake of marrying a certain young lady, he is not in the least disposed, for once in a way, to quarrel with the governor, especially as there are several bills which have shortly to be met with ready money, which, at present, is to be found only in his father's pockets.

There is one thing, however, which threatens to ruin his visit and to frustrate his father's purpose, and that is Lilian's affection for her cat. To begin with, he is madly jealous of the beast which comes in for all those caresses, and in the second place every opportunity which has presented itself for a comfortable *tête-à-tête* has been completely ruined by that confounded cat.

It is impossible to make love to a young lady who will insist on talking about her pets instead of about her lover or herself. It was Beetle this, and Beetle that, and Beetle everywhere, until the captain was thoroughly exasperated.

One evening he even plucked up courage to remonstrate at having to take a second place in the girl's affections, and declared his jealousy of the cat with all the eloquence he could command.

This was when Beetle had her soft paws round her mistress' neck, and the occasion seemed specially appropriate. To his intense surprise and disgust he had been politely called a donkey for his pains. After this he had done nothing but wish Beetle dead and buried. In his

She finds herself face to face with Captain Fairley.

anger he muttered something about setting his dog at the wretched tabby, and unfortunately Lilian had overheard him.

Of course he only meant it in fun, but he confessed afterwards that the next hour or two were the warmest he had ever spent in his life, and that facing the fire of a whole Russian regiment was absolutely child's play in comparison.

After that he saw it would be impossible to close the career of that chaperonic cat, however stealthily he did it, for suspicion was sure to fall eventually on himself or his dog, and his own ends would be frustrated.

As for Lilian, her one and only objection to Captain Fairley was his friendship for that horrid little terrier, which in the first place she considered it great impertinence for him to have brought into the house at all. Its one delight seemed to be to chase Beetle, and the tabby was by no means used to making sport for dogs.

Miss Hillyard was every bit as much jealous of the dog as the captain was of the cat. She thought it ridiculous to try and make love to a man who could think of nothing but a stupid terrier.

As a matter of fact Captain Fairley had no idea what a fuss he made over his pet. It was so natural for him that the little fellow should occupy the warmest corner in his heart that he never considered the question at all.

To his mind it was quite impossible to think of a more engrossing topic of conversation, whereas Lilian, very naturally, looked at the matter from a different point.

On three distinct occasions she had shut Beetle up in her bedroom, because it seemed to her that there were times when two were company and three none, even if the third party was a cat, and each time, instead of a *tête-à-tête* which she had sacrificed so much for, that disgusting little terrier had turned up and done nothing else but jump on and off his master's knee and demand her admiration. She was a lover of animals, but she learnt to hate that terrier with a deadly hate.

At last the day comes which is to end the captain's visit to the Deanery. It is very unfortunate for all parties concerned that so many people are coming to dinner on this, of all days, but it is a matter of long standing, and there is no way of postponing it.

The captain is conscious that his hour has come. It is now or never so far as declaring his intentions is concerned. However, the morning was spoilt by the presence of Beetle, and the whole afternoon Lilian made herself disagreeable on account of the terrier.

They have had five o'clock tea with the dean, and in an hour's time some of the guests will begin to arrive. Lilian goes off to dress without a word to Captain Fairley. He sees that his only chance is to follow her example, and by dressing early he may have an opportunity of getting one last word alone with her.

Lilian is the first down. She has not seen Beetle since tea time, and she goes out into the garden to look for her. It is a beautiful evening, but the heat is almost oppressive and the air is heavily scented with the perfume of flowers and newly-cut hay.

She has an idea that the captain will be coming out to look for her in a minute, and she is glad. As she reaches the shrubbery she hears a faint noise behind her, and turning round she sees the captain's terrier coming across the smooth, velvety lawn, and in another moment she expects to hear his master's footsteps. However, nothing comes.

Then a sudden idea enters her head. The terrier has been delivered into her hands. She will shut it up in that old oak chest in the summer-house until after dinner. It will be out of the way then if the captain does—"yes, quite so." And smiling to herself she takes the little fellow up in her arms and disappears through the bushes.

In the meantime Captain Fairley has come down to look for Lilian, and not meeting her in the drawing-room he goes out by the back way, expecting to find her in the green-house tending the flowers. However, she is not there, and he strolls through the kitchen-garden and enters the shrubbery from the other side, intending to collect his tennis things from the summer-house.

Presently he becomes conscious of a soft pitter-patter behind him, and turns round to find Beetle rubbing herself against his legs. The captain is a man of the world. He knows Lilian is probably near, and he takes the cat up with an extravagant show of affection, and lathers it with all the endearing terms he can conjure up. In this way he reaches the summer-house, and finds, rather to his surprise, that the girl is not there after all.

A malicious gleam lights up his face. By a merciful dispensation of Providence the cat is at his mercy. He listens intently and can hear no one. What a glorious opportunity. It does not take him a minute to lift up the lid of that great oak chest and to drop that cat in.

"There, Mrs. Tabby," he says, with a savage chuckle. "That will do very nicely for you until after dinner. Perhaps now I shall have an opportunity of making love to your mistress without getting sworn at by you, and scratched."

He had hardly said these words when he hears the creepers outside rustling. Someone is coming. If the cat mews he is undone, and in a desperate plight he jumps into the cupboard where the tennis things are kept, and crouches down with his eye to the keyhole.

He is not surprised to see Lilian come in. But what in the world is she doing with his dog under her arm? He is simply breathless with amazement, and presses closer and closer to the cupboard door.

In the meantime Lilian's conscience is pricking her, and as she puts one foot in the summer-house she is seized with a sudden fear, and her terrified imagination can distinctly hear the captain coming after her across the lawn. In a moment she has banged the door, and stands quite still listening.

Then she opens the lid of the chest, drops the dog in, and—finds herself face to face with Captain Fairley.

She has not time to faint, or even to scream, for she is petrified by the terrific shrieks of agony which are coming from that box. There is no mistaking Beetle's voice.

In a moment she has thrown the lid open again, and is down on her knees by the side of the chest; but the captain, his face pale with agitation, pulls her back.

"For heaven's sake, don't put your hand in!" he cried. "The dog will bite you all to pieces!"

They peer into the chest together; but it is so dark that they see nothing but four round balls of fire and flying fur. Never was there such a terrible fight between a dog and cat.

Lilian is frightened out of her life, but there is no time for explanations.

"Oh, Beetle, Beetle!" she cries; "the dog is killing her! Oh, save her, captain! save her!"

The captain is perfectly aware that the dog would just as soon bite him as the cat, now that his blood is up, but there is nothing for it but to dive down and catch hold of the first thing his hands light on. This happens to be Beetle's tail, and he drags her out with the dog hanging on to her fur.

Lilian, with a cry of pain, rushes forward and seizes her darling, while the wretched captain does what he can to disentangle the terrier, and now that he has time to think, he swiftly arrives at the conclusion that he is master of the situation.

Presently the two combatants are divided, and while Lilian binds up her cat in one corner of the summer-house, the captain attends to his dog's bleeding ears in the other.

There follows a few minutes' silence, broken only by the terrier's frantic barks and Lilian's sobs, while the cat swears terribly.

At last Lillian looks up through her tears.

"You brute," she says.

The captain feels his temper rise at this, but he takes rather a mean advantage of the girl.

"I thought you were so fond of your cat," he remarks, with a sneer.

"So I am," says Lilian indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I was only rather surprised at your setting my dog at her in that inhuman way. We do not generally throw dogs on to the top of cats we care for particularly."

"I didn't throw him on the top of her," Lilian cries. "You put her there, you nasty mean, sneaking fellow. What do you mean by touching my cat?"

"My dear Lilian, or—I—I mean Miss Hillyard—how can you talk such nonsense? If it comes to that, what do you mean by throwing my dog into that great chest? I suppose you knew it was the only thing in the world I love, and thought you would leave it there to die."

"You put my cat in first," Lilian retorts with a sob, and then the whole thing seems so ridiculous that she cannot help laughing, and the captain laughs, too.

After a time, as these things will, it comes out that it was only their love for one another that leads them to this ridiculous climax, and in making this delightful discovery they grow so emphatic and demonstrative that the dog and cat get loose and have another go at one another amidst the most terrific yells.

"I say, we had better get out of this," says the captain, when the combatants are once more separated. "It must be getting late."

He picks up the terrier under his arm and gropes his way towards the door, for the window is so overgrown with ivy that it is growing dark in there.

Suddenly he turns round with an exclamation of horror.

"My dear Lilian, what have you done to the handle?"

Lilian runs forward, and they find that in slamming the door, she has jarred the handle off inside, and the iron joint has fallen to the ground outside.

"Wait a minute and I will get my knife," Captain Fairley says, and then he finds that in dressing he has left it in his bedroom.

He tries to break the door open by force, but it is made of solid iron-bound oak in imitation of a church door, and all his weight makes no impression whatever. Then they try shouting, but no one appears.

There is nothing for it but to make the best of a very bad job and wait until someone comes to the rescue.

"It won't be very nice to be found out here together by the servants, will it?" Lilian suggests, and the captain agrees with her.

"We may be here all night," he says, "if they don't hear us. But, by Jove, they must be deaf if they don't hear this infernal din."

At the thought of this last catastrophe Lilian bursts into tears again, and the captain feels that it is his duty to comfort her. He suggests that they shall tie the dog in one corner with a handkerchief, and the cat in the other. They won't be so hampered in that way, and in another minute the lovers are so engrossed that they forget all about the dinner party, and everything else in the world but their love.

* * * * *

The dean is rather late with his dressing, and once or twice he fancies that he hears strange sounds at the other end of the garden, but as the summer-house door and his window are both shut, nothing very distinct reaches his ear, and he rather fancies it must be some drunken men in the town.

He hears the bishop's voice downstairs, and one by one all his guests arrive. He fondly imagines that Lilian is entertaining them, and he does not hurry.

At last his white tie is finished, and he opens his bedroom window, and looks out across the park. At this moment Beetle and the terrier have just got at one another for the second time, and in an instant the dean recognises the cat's voice.

"Ha," he cries, dancing with delight, "the bishop's boy again. At last! At last I am avenged."

The butler is rather surprised to see his master coming down the stairs three steps at a time, and the dean so excited that he scarcely stops to shake hands with all his astonished guests before he buttonholes the bishop.

"Come, my lord," he says with a glance of triumph and a voice loud enough to be overheard by many of the clergy standing round, "I want you to come into the garden for a minute and I will show you something which you would never believe unless you saw it with your own eyes. I want to show you the result of a father bringing up his children with boundless confidence in himself and in them, and also to impress upon you a fact which you are slow to believe—I mean that a man who brings up his family in what he considers the right way and does not take the trouble to watch them closely is a foolish man. Of course, I am aware that it is more difficult to make you believe this as you are the father of such a saintly set of children, but—" and the dean, with a smile to the assembled company, leads the way through the French window followed by the greater number of his guests.

His delight, as he hears the cat still screaming, is almost too much for him, and as they reach the summer-house he catches the sound of half-inaudible voices. The boys are trapped this time and no mistake. How foolish the bishop will look.

He picks up the handle which has fallen to the ground, fits it in very quietly, and then opening the door, stands back to make way for the bishop.

His cup of joy is full, when a titter runs round that interested group of guests, but he is hardly prepared to hear the bishop give an embarrassed little cough, and then join with the others in a covert smile. He looks in himself and sees Lilian and the captain standing hand in hand, while a wounded cat is mewing in one corner, and a bloodstained terrier in the other.

"I was not aware that such sports went on so near to the cathedral, Mr. Hillyard," the bishop says with grave disapproval as he sees the poor cat and dog for the first time.

And then he turns round and walks towards the house, followed by the rest of the guests, and leaving the unfortunate dean to collect his thoughts as best he can.

W. A. W.

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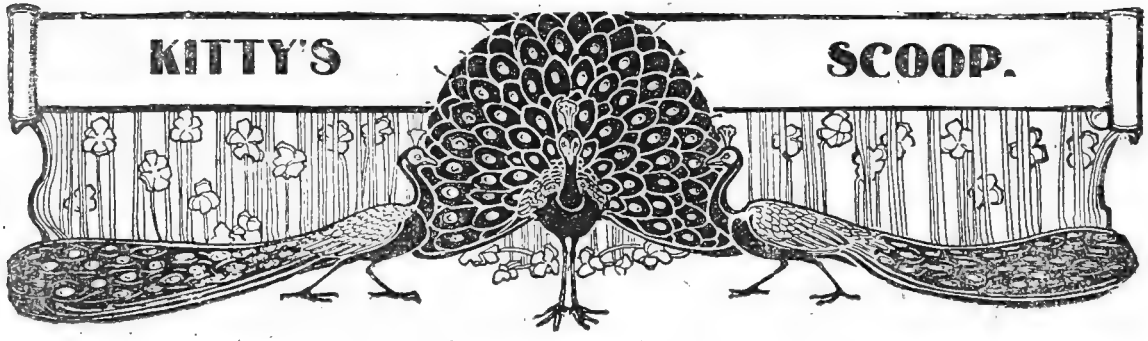

"I SCARCELY think you could get an interview from him, on any condition whatever," continued Mr. Joseph Harvey, editor of the *Empire Monthly*, leaning back in his chair. "We have frequently asked him to print something of his inner life, the methods of his work, and so on, but he always slips out of the calculations somehow, and the result is that while we have a hundred letters every month asking us to print something about the personality of the man who has the whole literary world trailing after him by the writing of one book, we can furnish nothing to satisfy the appetite of our readers."

Harvey sighed.

It was a girl that answered:

"But you see I don't intend to go about it like the official interviewer. He has just gone down to his new farm in Cornwall, and there they say he is as natural as the trees on his land, and as easily approached. Why not let me write the article after a few weeks of association right on the spot—his next-door neighbour, as it were? I can lodge at one of the neighbouring houses, on the pretence that I am there for the good of my health. Then I can watch him performing his daily tasks. All the while I can, by feigning a natural interest in agricultural affairs, get down to the bottom of his nature. Perhaps he will—yes, he cannot help branching out into what is his real interest in life. Doesn't that seem like a plan that will succeed, Mr. Harvey?"

"You don't know the man, Miss Tippin, he'll know your mission the first time he sets eyes on you, and he'll shut up like an oyster. But," he continued, "if you can get a truthful insight into his nature we will handle the article with much pleasure. It must be truth, though."

And Miss Tippin said, "All right," and left.

* * * * *

"Are you the boy that was to meet Miss Tippin at the station?" said that young lady, addressing a shabbily dressed urchin, who seemed to be looking for some one.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "Are you the lady?" he inquired shyly. Explanations followed, and soon the two were off down the dusty road, in a one-horse cart, the trunk and small luggage behind, and Miss Tippin holding her parasol over the boy, who held the reins.

"And you say your farm is next to that of Mr. Arthur Fairfax?" said Miss Tippin affably. (Arthur Fairfax was the celebrity she was trying to get at.)

"Yes, ma'am," said the boy, relapsing into silence.

"What does he do?"

"Oh, just farms, I s'pose. There ain't nothing else to do here." Then the boy turned and looked at Miss Tippin. "But he only come last month"

Miss Tippin smiled. So Fairfax was posing purely as a farmer! So much the better. She could pose as one with much interest in the same pursuit herself. She thought it best not to talk too much about the celebrity, for the boy had looked questioningly at her, and she knew he had a notion to ask her if she knew the man. Too much interest might arouse suspicion, and Fairfax might get to hear of it. So she talked commonplaces with the boy till they arrived at the little cottage where she was to make her headquarters while reconnoitring and taking the measurement of greatness.

The next morning Miss Tippin awoke with the songs of birds tickling her ears. It had rained during the night, and the cool breath of June filled the heart of the valley with jubilation. The perfume of some strange sweet blossom drifted in the window, and the sun danced like diamond gems in the rain drops that hung to the lobes of the leaves.

Miss Tippin was not the sort of girl to let nature run away with her real mission, however. She kept a keen look out for the celebrity as she busied herself exploring the place. She ventured out far into an adjoining meadow, edged with a little wood, and curiously pryed into spaces the hawthorn had not crowded into, and looked over the bank of a babbling brook, in the hope of catching the great man in one of his wandering moods, gazing up at the sky, thrilled at the birds, or talking back to the saucy brooklet.

She had given up her search for the morning. Returning home, she was just a trifle cross with herself, and the celebrity. Now, if there is one thing a cross girl ought not to meet, it is a five-barred gate. And that is just what Miss Tippin did meet. It stood up before her, bold and impregnable, as she emerged from the little woodland, and no hole to crawl through!

Beyond was an open field. The brambles and hawthorn branches extended up and even over the gate on the side from which she was to make the attack.

"Bother it!" blurted out Kitty Tippin.

She looked out over the field. She saw no person. Then she climbed up the gate, carefully gathering her skirts, and made the half-slide, half-leap that girls use when getting down from a gate. Not a trifle of her skirt caught.

But as she started to walk the first step, her head was jolted backward, and she felt a tug at her hair. One of the bramble twigs had caught her.

She put her hand up to loosen it.

There stood the celebrity!

Not out in the field, where she had looked, but quite close to her.

He was looking at her quizzically. Kitty Tippin felt

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somewhat confused. One hand she raised desperately to release her hair from the bramble, but every effort seemed only to make the tangle the tighter.

The celebrity seemed to comprehend the trouble.

"Pardon, Miss; can I be of assistance?" He advanced. Kitty had to smile. He had a hoe in one hand and his hat in the other. The soil clung to his shoes in great chunks every step he took.

"Do you own this farm?" asked the girl, evading the first question.

"I hate to acknowledge that I own the brambles," said the celebrity.

"But you do?" persisted the girl, standing erect, with one loop of golden-red hair drawn out and twisted about the impertinent bramble twig. It was one way of making sure that she had caught the genius.

"Well, I'm the landowner, and the labourer, and the water boy, and several other personages all in one. But may I not untangle the briar?"

"Before I give you that honour, promise me that you will clear away the brambles before I come down this way again."

"Trespassers don't, as a usual thing, demand that a path be cut through farms they want to tramp over——"

"And also I want you to promise that you will build a stile at this crossing-place," continued the girl, never noticing the interruption.

"And I'll root up a row of corn from this place right to the other end of the field, so that the stalks won't worry you later on in the season," he added, and the girl saw that he was facing about in his tactics.

"But do you promise?"

The celebrity hesitated.

"Then I hang here for an eternity," said the girl, "for you would release me only to set the trap again the next time I wish to climb that gate."

"I promise." He said this solemnly, and stuck the hoe into the soft soil. Then he wiped his hands on his trousers, and soon had the lock of hair free.

"Thank you," said the girl quietly. "Men never like their deeds of honour to go unnoticed, and that you may know who remembers yours——" She handed him her card, and he looked at it with a smile.

"Sorry I haven't any card," he said. The hard-used hands went deep into the muddy trousers, with yellow finger-marks on them.

"Oh, it doesn't matter much. I know you are too gallant to be the labourer, and I have heard of the genius who owns the land—and the brambles."

"The genius?"

"Yes, isn't that what they call them?".

"Well, I've been called about everything else since I came down here to farm, so I expect I can stand that too."

He laughed, half to himself; so merrily to himself that she thought him slightly impolite. But celebrities always are. She turned to go. He started too.

"Don't neglect the farming, pray, and the brambles," with an upraised hand to stay him.

"But—" and he made a couple of steps forward.

"Finish the row, that's more important."

"I just finished a row."

"And were just beginning another," and she hurried over the soft field, the man standing like the official dummy in front of a marked-down clothing house.

He looked at the brambles. One branch he eyed curiously for a moment, then drew from the leaves a long, golden-red hair.

The bramble he chopped down with his hoe, and threw away. But men never throw away golden-red hair.

* * * * *

The evening after meeting the celebrity, whom we must now refer to as Kitty Tippin referred to him—as Mr. Arthur Fairfax—the girl wrote a short letter to the editor of the *Empire Monthly*, telling him that she had fortunately met the genius under most favourable circumstances, and that she would immediately start to take down his theories on corn-planting; his snappy briefs on nature; his love of yellow mud; his deftness in getting people out of difficulties in real life, as well as in his books; his laughing blue eyes, with as many shades to them as hours in the day; his laws concerning trespassers on his premises; his capacity for doing everything at the same time; his occasional bursts of brusqueness that almost disarmed confidence in his claim to gentility, and his apparent youth, notwithstanding the seasoning of his wisdom. All of which mightily pleased the editor of the *Empire Monthly*. So he wrote back to "enter into the details of Fairfax's life, no matter if there is a great deal of yellow corn mixed in."

Then Kitty Tippin felt that she had a real start. She had met the celebrity, had evidently made impression enough upon him to interest him as much as his cornfield, which he had asked to leave for her sake, and had received authority from the *Empire Monthly* to find out all about his crops and his hair and his eyes, and to jot it down and give it to the world in burning lines of truth.

It was pleasant work, this detective authorship, too, and Kitty Tippin went about it with a smile in her heart and an air of confidence. All of which she was justly entitled to, under the circumstances, seeing that she was solving her problems according to the schedule.

For three weeks Mr. Arthur Fairfax kept giving up his secrets to Miss Kitty Tippin. The girl found the celebrity very much like other men—sometimes she thought he was considerably finer than some grades of mankind—and he sifted through the sieve of her ideal exactions without a second's coaxing; again, she discovered lumps in his nature, and when the gold had drained off she saw the dross in his heart. Then she changed her mind about celebrities.

But more often she changed the measure of her sieve, and let the hints of the mud that were in the man pass through without close investigation.

Now, when a man finds himself looking in a mirror in order to get extra glimpses of a girl turned from him, he can safely put it down that he is in love. And so with a girl. When she finds herself measuring with undue nicety the faults and frailties of a man, she, too, is in danger of finding that the gold is heavier than the clay. For all women are kind.

This is just the situation in which Kitty Tippin found herself. She did not know it though. As her work upon the biographical sketch progressed, however, she noticed that the fourth chapter had considerably more of the spirit of forgiveness for the faults of Mr. Fairfax than had the third chapter. This was an alarming symptom. But not for the girl. She thought it only a proof that she was learning more of the celebrity, who, in truth, had some symptoms himself, by this time, that he was not acquainted with. He noticed that he had more than unusual interest in the portion of the fence where he had cut down the brambles. He cleared away the weeds and the high grass. He built a three-step stile there, and always felt that he needed a rest when he got to the end of that row near that stile.

"I suppose it's because it's the only thing to sit down on," he said to himself one day. But what made him so furious when a crow on a dead limb not far away echoed peevishly: "Caw, caw"?

"You black fool!" he muttered. But crows are wise birds. They knew the stile had not been put up there for a scarecrow, even if it was on the edge of the cornfield.

When Kitty saw that stile and that tidy hedgerow, she had more clearly defined symptoms!

* * * * *

A week later the girl had sent off the article which she had worked upon through the pleasant month of June to the editor of the *Empire Monthly*. She felt that she had a "scoop" of decided value, and wrote as much to the editor. She might have taken it personally to the *Empire Monthly*, but she had a strong fancy that a "rose social" which was to be given at the neighbouring church two evenings later could not get along without her. The celebrity had said that same thing.

A week later the "rose social" was only a memory—but it had left a fragrance in Kitty Tippin's heart, She was sitting in the doorway of the cottage, thinking how only a celebrity could have framed the pretty phrase with which he had told her his love "closed the rose social," as he had said, "with the taming of his wild rose and the kiss of the rosebud lips."

It was a very sweet memory, that warm, dark night, with the mild odour of green things on the wayside and the music of his words, and Kitty put her face to the cluster of roses that hung by the doorway of the cottage and closed her eyes on the sweetness.

She was aroused by footsteps—pattering feet—and the boy who had driven her to the cottage from the station, and who was now her devoted servant, came up the pathway with a letter.

It was from the editor of the *Empire Monthly*, and it read:

> "What kind of nonsense are you sending us? We deem it possible that you were 'really in need of better health when you went to spy on the celebrity.' Mr. Arthur Fairfax has been in this office every day for the last month. In fact, he arrived before my letter could have reached you, and he had not been on his farm for a week before that time. We can't use the sketch, because, while Mr. Fairfax has a farm, he says he didn't plant a cabbage or a grain of corn. He knows nothing about building stiles, and your description of his personal appearance would be about as true as the biography of a polar bear sent in to throw light on the 'Personal Side of the Egyptian Sphinx.' You might dispose of this thing to one of the fiction magazines."

Kitty Tippin gasped. Fainting was not one of her accomplishments. After a long, dumb look she turned to the boy.

"Who owns this cornfield next to your farm?" she asked.

"Do you mean the one you go through so often?" said the boy.

"Well, y-e-s."

"Mr. Brighton owns that. He bought it this spring, you know, from Widow Brown. She's dead now That's her new grave up there at——"

"And what does Mr. Brighton do? I mean what did he do?"

"I don't know, miss. They said he was one of the high-up fellows in London, and that he got sick of all the fuss and just come here to live awhile. He must have money, though, for he has got good horses, and he isn't stingy. The fellows went to him one day, and— "

"But didn't you tell me that Mr. Arthur Fairfax lived on a farm next to yours? Don't you remember? You told me that coming in the cart from the station?"

"Yes, ma'am, but he's over here on the *other* side of our farm. The folks say he can't grow nothing. His farm begins just down over the hill, there."

"On the *other* side?" and the girl leapt to her feet. A moment later the boy heard her racing up the stairs and slamming the door of her room. He thought he heard sobs.

The editor of the *Empire Monthly* two days' later received a very short note from Kitty Tippin, declaring that "a very peculiar chain of circumstances over which she had had no control had led her into the unpardonable blunder," asking at the same time that "mercy be granted, as she had granted mercy to the villain who had been the cause of the mistake." In the autumn, however—in blushing October—the editor received another letter, and when he had opened the double envelopes, a card dropped out. He fished forth a stylish invitation, announcing that "Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tippin requested his presence at the marriage of their daughter Katherine Gertrude, to Henry Watterson Brighton, at——"

The editor of the *Empire Monthly* was one of the prominent guests at the wedding. After the bride's cake had been cut, and Mrs. and Mr. Brighton had made their escape amid a shower of shoes and rice, the complacent editor told one of the best stories the smart set had added to its list in the season. He told it when Kitty's mother was not within hearing, and the guests had to lie to that lady when she innocently inquired about the cause of all the merriment.

"I say, Harvey, that story's worth keeping in the official roster," said one of the men to the editor. "What name shall we give it for reference purposes?"

"Let's see," said the editor, scratching his head Oh, yes, it wasn't printed, but here's a fine climax for the final chapter to-night. I think we'll call it 'Kitty Tippin's Scoop.'"

Aloysius Coll.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

"**Another Woman**" sends me a very nice letter and asks my qualification to give advice that may make or mar a life.———In reply I can only say that I have no qualification but my own sympathy with my correspondents and desire to help them with their love affairs. I cannot claim infallible wisdom, but I can tell them how I should act were I in their place, which they can adopt or reject according to their own personal feelings. Nobody can really advise a lover by cold calculation. One must just feel as they feel, and tell them such truths as perhaps, in the blindness of love, they have overlooked. In the long run, of course, love laughs at love experts, no less than locksmiths, and I daresay I shall come in for a certain amount of the merriment. But reasoning is to love what a signpost is to the traveller. It tells him were certain roads lead, but which he takes is his own affair I simply try, out of my own reasoning, to be a signpost, with sympathies.

"**Difficulty**" (aged twenty) is attached to a lady five years older than himself. He earns 25s. a week, with the prospect of double in three or four years' time. She earns £2 a week, but supports her widowed mother and family from it. Should he start courting her now, and if so, how?———I am sorry to have to be a horrid signpost in answering you. You will not be in a position to marry for three or four years. That would not be so unfortunate under other circumstances, but seeing that your friend is in business, and that several lives are dependent on her efforts I fear you would be doing ill in entertaining any ideas of marriage. In the first instance, your wife would have to throw up her business engagement, or neglect your household. If she did the former, the responsibility for her helpless relations must fall on you, which you could ill afford. There is no harm, however, in telling the girl the facts of the case; if she is willing to have a long courtship, well and good, though, at the same time, I should not advise it. And if she continued in business, you would have rather a rough time of it at home. A woman cannot work all day, and then turn to household duties without serious danger to her health, to say nothing of her happiness. Unless your business prospects look up very considerably within the next few years, I fear you would be encountering great trouble for both yourself and the girl by marriage under present circumstances.

You want to know of a wash or lotion for darkening fair hair, "Snowdrop," and yet keeping it glossy. Well, I am afraid unless you can afford to go to a first-rate hairdresser from time to time you will find it practically impossible. Hair dyes which are sold to the public are almost invariably worthless, and it needs a skilled hand to insure keeping the gloss on it. Why dye it at all? Fair hair is so pretty. Write to me as often as you like, and ask as many questions as you please. I shall always be glad to help you. Thanks for good wishes.

Now, "Dick," if you think for a minute, you will see that it is just a little selfish on your part to expect your sister to sew things for you and help you to attend to your goldfish and rabbits, and yet object when she asks you to make her house duties a trifle easier for her by keeping your room a little more tidy. My impression is that many boys and young fellows lose a great deal of pleasure in life by not treating their sisters in a brotherly way. They say "she is only a girl," as though that settled it; but you take my advice and treat your sister as your equal—she *is* your equal, though you may not like to acknowledge it—and you will be surprised to find how jolly it will be.

Of course, "Harry," young men have love troubles as well as young ladies, and your letter is just as welcome as from one of the opposite sex. You are desperately in love with a young woman, who is a little higher in the social scale than yourself, and on that account you feel that you cannot venture to tell her of your esteem for her. Yet you think that she has a similar feeling for you. You are making efforts to rise in the world and have reason to think that you will succeed. Well, you know that "faint heart never won fair lady," if you are backward in declaring yourself, the probability is that you will lose her. So "take your courage in both hands," as they say on the Continent, and tell her that you love her and of your prospects and plans for the future. I shall be surprised if you do not win her.

"**M. W. B.**" was once a groom but is now a publican with means When a groom a young lady he walked out with disdained his suit because of his poverty. Now he is better off she has discovered she loves him. But meanwhile he has taken up with another damsel, who it appears always loved him.———I think you should obey your own feelings in this matter. Whom do you love the best, the girl who thought you were not good enough for her until you got your present position, or the girl who loved you all along? You should certainly marry the one you really love, and agree to let bygones be bygones. At the same time, the young lady who only began to think of you as a husband when you improved your finances would seem to be rather a worldly individual, and if I had the settlement of the matter, I should be strongly inclined to seal the union between you and the other one, whose love for you would appear to be the more enduring. But if it is the first one you love, don't hesitate to take her back to your bosom, if you can do it without breaking anyone's heart.

THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXIV (*continued*).

Rejoiced to see the man so wide awake in him, I followed him closely across the terrace and through the rose garden to the bank of the river. This we followed until we came at last to the belt of willows, where, having found a suitable patch of even and springy turf, I drew my sword and invited him to make ready.

"Will you not strip?" he inquired sullenly.

"I do not think so," I answered. "The night air is sharp. Nevertheless, do you make ready as best you deem fit, and that speedily, Monsieur."

With an exclamation of contempt, he divested himself of his wig, mask, and doublet; then, drawing his sword, came forward and announced himself at my disposal.

As you may well conceive, we wasted no time in compliments, but straightway went to work, and that with a zest that drew sparks from our rapiers at the first contact.

The Marquis attacked me furiously, and therein lay his only chance; for a fierce, rude swordplay that is easily dealt with in broad daylight is vastly discomposing in such pale moonshine as lighted us. I defended myself warily, for of a sudden I had grown conscious of the danger that I ran did he once by luck or strength get past my guard with that point of his, which in the spare light I could not follow closely enough to feel secure.

'Neath the fury of his onslaught I was compelled to break ground more than once, and each time he was so swift to follow up his advantage that I had ne'er a chance to retaliate.

Still, fear or doubt of the issue I had none. I needed but to wait until the Marquis' fury was spent by want of breath to make an end of it. And presently that which I waited for came about. His attack began to lag in vigour, and the pressure of his blade to need less resistance, whilst his breathing grew noisy as that of a broken-winded horse. Then, with the rage of a gambler who loses at every throw, he reviled me with every thrust or lunge that I turned aside.

My turn was come; yet I held back, and let him spend his strength to the utmost drop, whilst with my elbow close against my side, and by an easy play of wrist, I diverted each murderous stroke of his point, that came again and again for my heart.

When at last he had wasted in blasphemies what little breath his wild exertions had left him, I let him feel on his blade the twist that heralded my first advance. He caught the thrust, and retreated a step, his blasphemous tongue silenced, and his living face bathed in perspiration.

Cruelly I toyed with him then, and with every disengage I made him realise that he was mastered, and that if I withheld the final blow, it was but to prolong his agony. And to add to the bitterness of that agony of his, I derided him whilst I fenced; with a recitation of his many sins I mocked him, showing him how ripe he was for death, and asking him how it felt to die unshriven with such a load upon his soul.

Goaded to rage by my bitter words, he ground his teeth, and gathered what rags of strength were left him for a final effort. And before I knew what he was about, he had dropped on to his left knee, and with his body thrown forward and supported within a foot of the ground by his left arm, he came, like a snake, under my guard, with his point directed upwards.

So swift had been this movement, and so unlooked for, that had I not sprung backwards in the very nick of time, this narrative of mine had ne'er been written. With a jeering laugh I knocked aside his sword, but even as I disengaged, to thrust at him, he knelt up and caught my blade in his left hand, and for all that it ate its way through the flesh to the very bones of his fingers, he clung to it with that fierce strength and blind courage that is born of despair.

Then, raising himself on his knees again, he struck at me wildly, I swung aside, and as his sword, missing its goal, shot past me, I caught his wrist in a grip from which I contemptuously invited him to free himself. With that began a fierce tugging and panting on both sides, which, however, was of short duration, for presently my blade, having severed the last sinew of his fingers, was set free. Simultaneously I let go his wrist, pushing his arm from me so violently that, in his exhausted condition, it caused him to fall over on his side.

In an instant, however, he was up and at me again. Again our swords clashed, but once only. It was time to finish. With a vigorous disengage I got past his feeble guard, and sent my blade into him full in the middle of the chest, and out again at his back, until a foot or so of glittering steel protruded.

A shudder ran through him, and his mouth worked oddly, whilst spasmodically he still sought, without avail, to raise his sword; then, as I recovered my blade, a half-stifled cry broke from his lips, and throwing up his arms he staggered and fell in a heap.

As I turned him over to see if he were dead, his eyes met mine, and were full of piteous intreaty; his lips moved, and presently I caught the words:

"I am sped, Luynes." Then struggling up, and in a louder voice, "A priest!" he gasped. "Get me a priest, Luynes. Lord! Have mer——"

A rush of blood choked him and cut short his utterance. He writhed and twitched for a moment, then his chin sank forward, and he fell back, Death stiffening his limbs, and glazing the eyes which stared hideously upwards at the cold, pitiless moon.

Such was the passing of the Marquis César de St. Auban.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Play-Acting.

For a little while I stood gazing down at my work, my mind full of the unsolvable mysteries of life and death, then I bethought me that time stood not still for me, and that something yet remained to be accomplished ere my evening's task were done.

And forthwith I made shift to do a thing at the memory of which my blood is chilled and my soul is filled with loathing even now, albeit the gulf of many years separates me from that June night at Canaples.

To pass succinctly o'er an episode on which I have scant heart to tarry, suffice it you to know I bound a heavy stone to St. Auban's ankle; then lifting the body in my arms, I half-dragged, half-bore it across the little stretch of intervening sward to the water's edge, and flung it in.

As I write I have the hideous picture in my mind, and again I see St. Auban's ghastly face grinning up at me through the moonlit waters, until at last it was mercifully swallowed up in their black depths, and naught but a swirling wavelet that spread swiftly across the stream was left to tell of what had chanced.

I dare not dwell upon the feelings that assailed me as I stooped to rinse the blood from my hands, nor yet of the feverish haste wherewith I tore my blood-stained doublet from my back, and hurled it wide into the stream. For all my callousness I was sick and unmanned by that which had befallen.

No time, however, did I waste in mawkish sentiment, but setting my teeth hard, I turned away from the river, and back to the trampled ground of our recent conflict. There, with no other witness save the moon, I clad myself in the Marquis' doublet of black velvet. I set his mask of silk upon my face, his golden wig upon my head, and over that his sable hat with its drooping feather. Next I buckled on his sword belt, wherefrom hung his rapier that I had sheathed.

In Blois that day I had taken the precaution, knowing the errand upon which I came, to procure myself knickerbockers of black velvet, and black leather boots with gilt spurs that closely resembled those which St. Auban had worn in life.

Now, as I have already written, St. Auban and I were much of the same build and stature, and so methought with confidence that he would have shrewd eyes, indeed, who could infer from my appearance that I was other than the same masked gentleman who had that very day ridden into Canaples at the head of a troop of His Eminence's guards.

I made my way swiftly back along the path that St. Auban and I had together trodden but a little while ago, and past the Château, until I came to the shrubbery where Michelot, faithful to the orders I had given him, awaited my return. From his concealment he had seen me leave the Château with the Marquis, and as I loomed suddenly up before him now, he took me for the man whose clothes I wore, and naturally enough assumed that ill had befallen Gaston de Luynes. Of a certainty I had been pistolled by him had I not spoken in time. I lingered but to give him certain necessary orders; then while he went off to join Abdon and see to their fulfilment, I made my way steathily, with eyes keeping watch around me, across the terrace, and through the window into the room that St. Auban had left to follow me to his death.

The tapers still burnt, and in all respects the chamber was as it had been; the back and breast pieces still lay upon the floor, and on the table the littered documents. The door, I ascertained, had been locked on the inside, a precaution which St. Auban had no doubt taken so that none might spy upon the work that busied him.

I closed and made fast the window, then I bethought me that being in ignorance of the whereabouts of St. Auban's bedchamber, I must perforce spend the night as best I could within that very room.

And so I sat me down and pondered deeply o'er the work that was to come, the part I was about to play, and the details of its playing. In this manner did I while away perchance an hour; through the next one I must have slept, for I awakened with a start to find three tapers spent and the last one spluttering, and in the sky the streaks that heralded the summer dawn.

Again I fell to thinking; again I slept, and woke again to find the night gone and the sunlight on my face. Some one knocked at the door, and that knocking vibrated through my brain and set me wide awake indeed. It was as the signal to uplift the curtain and let my play-acting commence.

Hastily I rose and shot a glance at the mirror to see that my wig hung straight and that my mask was rightly adjusted. I started at my own reflection, for methought that from the glass 'twas St. Auban who looked at me as I had seen him look the night before when he had donned those things at my command.

"*Hola* there, within!" came Montrésor's voice. "Monsieur le Capitaine!" And a fresh shower of blows descended on the oak panels.

I yawned with prodigious sonority and overturned a chair with my foot. Then bracing myself for the ordeal, through which I looked to what scant information I possessed and my own mother wit to bear me successfully, I strode across to admit my visitor.

Muffling my voice, as I had heard St. Auban do in the inn, by drawing my nether lip over my teeth.

"By Gad!" quoth I, as I opened the door. "It seems, lieutenant, that I must have fallen asleep over those musty documents."

I trembled as I watched him, waiting for his reply, and I thanked Heaven that in the *rôle* I had assumed a mask was worn, not only because it hid my features, but because it hid the emotions which these might have betrayed.

"I was beginning to fear," he replied coldly, and without so much as looking at me, "that worse had befallen you."

I breathed again.

"You mean?"

"Pooh, nothing!" said he, half-contemptuously. "Only methinks 'twere well whilst we remain at Canaples that you do not spend your nights in a room within such easy access to the terrace."

"Your advice no doubt is sound, but as I shall not spend another night at Canaples, it comes too late."

"You mean, Monsieur?"

"That we set out for Paris to-day."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Impossible! I have just visited the stables, and there are not four horses fit for the journey. So that unless you have in mind the purchase of fresh animals——"

"Pish! My purse is not bottomless," I broke in, repeating the very words that I heard St. Auban utter.

"So you said once before, Monsieur. Still, unless you are prepared to take that course, the only alternative is to remain here until the horses are sufficiently recovered. But perhaps you think of walking?" he added, with a sniff.

"Such is *your* opinion, your time being worthless, and it being of little moment where you spend it. *I* have conceived a plan."

"Ah!"

"Has it not occurred to you that the danger which threatens us, and which calls for the protection of a troop, is only on this side of the Loire, where the Bloisois might be minded to attempt a rescue of the Chevalier? But over yonder, Chevalier, on the Chambord side, who cares a fig for the Lord of Canaples or his fate? None; is it not so?"

He made an assenting gesture, whereupon I continued, "This being so, I have bethought me that it will suffice if I take but three or four men and the sergeant as an escort, and cross the river with our prisoner after nightfall, travelling along the opposite shore until we reach Orleans. What think you, lieutenant?"

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"'Tis you who command here," he answered with apathy, "not I."

"Nevertheless, do you not think the plan a safe one, as well as one that will allay His Eminence's very natural impatience?"

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"Oh, it is safe enough, I doubt not," he replied coldly.

"Your enthusiasm determines me," quoth I, with an irony that made him wince. "And we will follow the plan, since you agree with me touching its excellence. But keep the matter to yourself until an hour or so after sunset."

He bowed, so utterly my dupe that I could have laughed at him. Then,

"There is a little matter that I would mention," he said. "Mademoiselle de Canaples has expressed a wish to accompany her father to Paris, and has asked me whether this will be permitted her."

My heart leapt. Surely the gods fought on my side.

"I cannot permit it," I answered icily.

"Monsieur, you are pitiless," he protested, in a tone of indignation, for which I could gladly have embraced him.

I feigned to ponder.

"The matter needs consideration. Tell Mademoiselle that I will discuss it with her at noon, if she will condescend to await me on the terrace. I will then give her my definite reply. And now, lieutenant, let us breakfast."

As completely as I had duped Montrésor did I presently dupe those of the troopers with whom I came in contact, among others the sergeant, and anon the Chevalier himself.

From the brief interview that I had with him I discovered that whilst he but vaguely suspected me to be St. Auban—and when I say, "he suspected me," I mean he suspected him whose place I had taken—he was nevertheless aware of the profit which his captor, whoever he might be, derived from this business. It soon grew clear to me from what he said that St. Auban had mocked him with it whilst concealing his identity; that he had told him how he had obtained from Malpertuis the treasonable letter, and of the bargain which it had enabled him to strike with Mazarin. I did not long remain in his company, and deeming the time not yet ripe for disclosures, I said little in answer to his lengthy tirades, which had, I guessed, been made for scope to trap me into betraying the identity he suspected.

It wanted a few minutes to noon as I left the room in which the old nobleman was confined, and by the door of which a trooper was stationed, musket on shoulder. With every pulse a-throbbing at the thought of my approaching interview with Mademoiselle, I made my way below and out into the bright sunshine, the soldiers I chanced to meet saluting as I passed them.

On the terrace I found Mademoiselle already awaiting me. She was standing, as often I had seen her stand, with her back turned towards me and her elbows resting upon the balustrade. But as my step sounded behind her, she turned, and stood gazing at me with a face so grief-stricken and pale, that I longed to unmask and set her torturing fears at rest. I doffed my hat, and greeted her with a silent bow, which she contemptuously disregarded.

"My lieutenant tells me, Mademoiselle," said I in my counterfeited voice, "that it is your desire to bear Monsieur your father company upon this journey of his to Paris?"

"With your permission, sir," she answered, in a choking voice.

"It is a matter for consideration, Mademoiselle," I pursued. "There are in it many features that may have escaped you, and which I shall discuss with you if you will honour me by stepping into the garden below."

"Why will not the terrace serve?"

"Because I may have that to say which I would not have overheard."

She knit her brows and stared at me as though she would penetrate the black silk that hid my face. At last she shrugged her shoulders, and letting her arms fall to her side in a gesture of helplessness and resignation, "So be it; I will go with you," was all she said.

Side by side we went down the steps as a pair of lovers might have gone, save that her face was drawn and white, and that her eyes looked straight before her, and never once, until we reached the gravel path below, at her companion. Side by side we walked along one of the rose-bordered alleys, until at length I stopped.

"Mademoiselle," I said, speaking in the natural tones of that good-for-naught Gaston de Luynes, "I have already decided, and you have my permission to accompany your father."

At the sound of my voice she started, and with her left hand clutching at the region of her heart she stood, her head thrust forward, and on her face the look of one who is confronted with some awful doubt. That look was brief, however, and swift to replace it was one of hideous revelation.

"In Heaven's name, who are you?" she cried in accents that bespoke internal agony.

"Already you have guessed it, Mademoiselle," I answered, and I would have added that which should have brought comfort to her distraught mind when,

"*You!*" she gasped in a voice of profound horror. "*You!* You the Judas who has sold my father to the Cardinal for a paltry share in our estates! And I believed that mask of yours to hide the face of St. Auban!"

Her words froze me into a stony mass of insensibility. There was no logic in my attitude; I see it now. Appearances were all against me, and her belief was no more than justified. I overlooked all this, and instead of wasting time to recount how I came to be there, and thus deliver her from the anguish that was torturing her, I stood, dumb and cruel, cut to the quick by her scorn and suspicions that I was capable of such a thing as she imputed, and listening to the dictates of an empty pride that prompted me to make her pay full penalty.

"Oh, God pity me!" she wailed. "Have you naught to say?"

Still I maintained my mad, resentful silence. And presently, as one who muses, "*You!*" she said again. "You whom I—" She stopped short. "Oh! The shame of it!" she moaned.

Reason at last came uppermost, and as in my mind I completed her broken sentence, my heart gave a great throb, and I was thawed to a gentler purpose.

"Mademoiselle!" I exclaimed.

But even as I spoke she turned, and sweeping aside her gown that it might not touch me, she moved rapidly towards the steps we had but descended. Full of remorse I sprang after her.

"Mademoiselle! Hear me!" I cried, and put forth my hand to stay her.

Thereat she wheeled round and faced me, a blaze of fury in her grey eyes.

"Dare not to touch me!" she panted. "You thief! You hound!"

I recoiled, and like one turned to stone I stood and watched her mount the steps, my feelings swaying violently 'twixt anger and sorrow. Then my eye fell upon Montrésor standing on the topmost step, and on his face there was a sneering, insolent smile which told me that he had heard the epithets she had bestowed upon me.

Albeit I sought that day another interview with Yvonne, I did not gain it, and so I was forced to sun myself in solitude upon the terrace. But I cherished for my consolation that broken sentence of hers, whereby I read that the coldness which she had evinced for me before I left Canaples had but been assumed.

(To be concluded.)

[In the next number of *Short Stories* will begin a serial romance of powerful human interest, entitled "Link by Link." It is a story of to-day—a story of modern love and hate, grief and joy, crime and passion. From the first line to the close of the story you will be held spellbound. Do not fail to secure a copy of *Short Stories* next week.]

STRANGE MENTAL POWERS.

HOW PEOPLE ARE INFLUENCED.

Startling Words from the Committee Appointed to Investigate Hypnotism for the Benefit of Journal Readers.

REV. PAUL WELLER, Gorham, N.Y.

G. S. LINCOLN, M.D., 101 Crutchfield Street, Dallas, Tex.

F. H. STOUFER, Sec. & Treas. of Railway Conductors, Pueblo, Col.

JUDGE HENRY SCHAFER, Flemington, N.J.

Hypnotism is no longer a myth, a fanciful creation of the mind, but a reality, a most potent power capable of producing infinite good For the purpose of ascertaining the exact value of this much-talked-of power, a committee, composed of a physician, a well-known jurist, a prominent minister and a leading railroad man, was appointed to investigate Hypnotism.

The committee carried on a series of investigations in regard to the power of hypnotism to influence the actions and deeds of people in the everyday walks of life.

The first step taken by the members of the committee was to master the science in every detail, so that they might state from personal experience the good or evil this strange power might produce. They wrote the New York Institute of Science, of Rochester, N. Y., the greatest school of Hypnotism and Occult Science in the world, and received full and complete instructions in regard to how hypnotism may be used to influence people in business, how to use it in treating diseases, etc., etc. In a few days they mastered these instructions and were full-fledged hypnotists.

It was clearly demonstrated that hypnotism may be employed so that the person operated upon is entirely unconscious of the fact that he is being influenced; and, all things considered, the committee regard it as the most valuable discovery of modern times. A knowledge of it is essential to one's success in life and well-being in society.

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Rev. Paul Weller says that every minister and every mother should understand hypnotism for the benefit they can be to those with whom they are brought in daily contact.

In speaking of this marvellous power, President Eliot, of Harvard College, said to the graduates: "Young gentlemen, there is a subtle power lying latent in each of you, which few of you have developed, but which, when developed, might make a man irresistible. It is called Personal Magnetism or Hypnotism. I advise you to master it."

The New York Institute of Science has just issued 10,000 copies of a book which fully explains all the secrets of this marvellous power, and gives explicit directions for becoming a practical hypnotist, so that you can employ the force without the knowledge of anyone. Anybody can learn. Success is guaranteed.

The book also contains a full report of the members of the committee. It will be sent absolutely free to anyone who is interested. A penny postal card will bring it. Write to-day. Address:

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE (Dept. VA11), **ROCHESTER, N.Y., U.S.A.**

Her First Engagement.

Of all the hopeful English girls in Milan who had reached the close of their term of preparation for the operatic stage that year, none gave such small promise of success—so the others whispered—as a certain little maid from Devonshire, by name Bettina Langdon. The croakers were obliged to own that she had beauty, but her voice and temperament! Horrors! No impresario could think of engaging her. And yet Bettina was the very first of the lot to get an engagement. It came about this wise—all in the springtime.

Most of the girls studied with old San Donino, a wily snuff-taking master of music, who, it cannot be denied, knew much about training the human voice. But he was a master as well in the art of making English girls who came to Italy to study, believe that they were born for the stage, and if they only took lessons of him—it was merely a matter of time (and money)—when they should embitter the existence of Nordica, Eames, Calvé, or any other great star that might be glittering in the firmament. So there was seldom an hour of the day when his rather shabby little studio—two flights up on the rear court, in Via Brera—did not sound with the voices of his "victims," as the sculptors and painters on the floor above used to call the girls.

Near the studio, its broad porte-cochère opening on the pavement of Via Brera, stood the palace of the Duke of Loduoli—a stately pile, grey with its centuries of age. The old nobleman, who had once served Italy in a diplomatic post at St. James', was fond of the society of the Britishers, and was often seen at their colony's evening parties. It was his delight now and then to have San Donino bring his English girls to the palace to assist at a *musicale* or a *conversazione*.

It was on one of these evenings at the palace that Bettina met the impresario who gave her her first engagement. Among the glided youth of Milan who made up part of the company was the duke's elder son, Prince Francesco, a wide-awake aristocrat who forgot to pose, and who travelled everywhere. He was fond of practising his English, and he talked to Bettina of his tour in the British Isles, and made her laugh by saying that the thing he liked best was a song he had heard in London about one little girl who didn't want to play in another little girl's garden, as he put it. Bettina had often sung the ditty in her schooldays—she thought of it sadly—and the words and tune began to run in her head. This happened while the master was showing off his pupils. One after another they had taken their places at the piano while he accompanied them in arias from the operas in which they dreamt some day of singing the leading *rôles*; and one after another they had been rewarded with the polite applause of the company. At length it became Bettina's turn. In a low voice she spoke to the maestro while he opened a sheet of music and placed it on the ledge.

"I shall not sing that," she said.

"What!" San Donino swung round on the stool and stared at her in amazement, a spot of snuff on the tip of his nose. He met the calm gaze of Bettina. "What you sing, then?" he said, somewhat meekly.

"Listen, and you will hear."

Then while the maestro sat open-mouthed at the silent piano she began the simple strain of "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard." She sang in the sweet artless manner of her early girlhood, free from the studied mouthings and breathings that often make the vocal scholar ridiculous, and in a voice as pure as nature. It was a strange piece to sing to an Italian company, but everyone listened in delight. This time the applause was not merely polite. It rang with genuine feeling and mingling cries of "Brava!" and "Ancora!" though only the Duke and his son understood the words.

"You sang like an angel of Heaven," Prince Francesco whispered as he took her into the supper of coloured sweets that the Italians like even more than coloured pastry and sparkling red wine of Asti that they love so dearly. "And you sang it for me," he breathed, looking into her eyes.

"It pleased me as well," she said, and he felt that her meaning was free of self-conceit. "I seemed to be at home again in England singing—a little girl again in the days when mother was alive."

They met the next afternoon in the Victor Emmanuel Arcade, where he had waited two hours for her to pass. They walked to the cathedral in the piazza, and he showed her a chapel that his ancestors had built four hundred years ago. She told him of a poor little churchyard in a Devonshire town, and of a girl who came to Italy to study music that she might make her own way in the world.

In a few days it had grown to be their custom to walk together from the music studio. Once they were passing the porte-cochère of his father's palace. Spring was in its full flush, and plants bloomed on the balconies of Via Brera, and she spoke of their beauty.

"Will you come into our garden?" he asked. Through the arch of the portico she could see the wealth of greenery. "Come, I will show you some flowers." Side by side they walked through the grounds, under canopies of gorgeous magnolias, beside fragrant oleanders and sparkling fountains and urns of blossoming glory.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" was all that she could say.

"Yes," he said passionately; "but not so beautiful as you are to me. Bettina, I love you. Some day this yard will be mine. Will you come and play in it?"

For a moment they regarded one another silently, he holding her hand, and then both gave way to joyous mirth.

"I want you for my princess," said her impresario, and Bettina's first and last engagement was sealed then and there.

H. W. Thomas.

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BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents decay. Saves extraction. Sleepless nights prevented. It removes Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains. Of all Chemists 1/1½.

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100 years worldwide use proves them the **BEST FAMILY MEDICINE**

Of all Chemists 1/1½, 2/9 & 4/6 per box.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 55—60," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 10th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 55. LOST WORDS.

Fill in the blanks of the following lines with a word of seven letters, using the same letters, transposed, each time:

That merciless —\— was hurled at you,
At you, a proud ——, of Dons the chief.
No wonder you were —— when you knew
It might —— a mind both calm and true
Let's feel ——; that may be some relief.

No. 56. WORD SQUARE.

Form a word square from equivalents of the following: A disease; pertaining to a heavenly body; a fruit; a bird; a place of public exertion.

No. 57. PROVERB MAKING.

The following letters, rearranged, constitute a well-known proverb:

AA C EEE FF HH IIIII M NN OOO P RR SS TTTTT.

No. 58. TRANSPOSED SENTENCES.

The following words when rearranged will form two sentences, one of eighteen words, the other of thirty:

From a splendid clear ceiling at two edged from invisible lamp masked by a black head hanging above a linen veil of blue vestments steady in burnt priest with her golden brows with eyeholes a flame shaven white suspended the altar of the end stood in his either.

No. 59. CHARADE.

My FIRST is void of ornament,
With artfulness unfilled:
You'll find me in the forest,
And also view me tilled.

A SECOND of good spirits
Some people take in tea;
But do not have a SECOND
If you can't discover me.

My WHOLE now, if you wish to be,
Sue someone, say, for cash,
Tho' mind I don't advise you
To be so very rash.

No. 60. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Initials and finals of equivalents of the following give names of two English cities: A deadly plant; a wild evergreen shrub; to condemn; a fish; a fruit; a servant.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

FANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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The Art of Beauty,

By a Toilet Specialist.

PRICE 1s., or POST FREE, 1s. 2d.

Here are a few of the numerous subjects dwelt upon in this splendid handbook:

Cure for acne or blackheads—Reducing Stoutness—Arms, hands, and nails—Bleaching the hair—Complexion brushes—Baths—Toilet vinegars—"Physical Beauty," of what it consists—Types of Beauty—Bicycle saddles—Colours for blondes—Danger in using the commonly puffed "Bloom"—Bloomers for Cycling—The Bodice for evening wear—Boots—Evils of tight boots and high heels—Colours for brunes—How to improve the bust—Chamois leather versus the "puff"—Benefit of bathing the chest—Preventative against chilblains—Beauty and health of children—Clothing for children—"Clammy" hands and the cure—Classification of beauty—Cold cream, recipe for making, etc.—Warning against small-tooth combs—Combinations, for winter and summer wear—Bad complexions and their causes—To darken the hair—Prevention of corns—Use and abuse of corsets—Corsets for stout people—Faults of English corsets—Cricket for girls—Hair-curlers—Dandruff and its cure, etc., etc.

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17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "The Art of Beauty," for which I inclose the sum of one shilling and twopence.

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Address.....

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Unsentimental.

Mr. Poeticus (entering cheerfully): "My love is like the red, red rose!" Mrs. Poeticus (looking up from the stove): "You'd look red, too, you lazy scribbler, if you'd been bending over a frying-pan for twenty minutes!"

She'd Had a Good Time.

Maid: "Gentleman wishes to see you, mum, Here's his card." Miss Flirtie: "Um—I don't remember that name." "He said, mum, that you was to see him, or else give him something of his you had." "It must be someone I met at the seaside last summer. Take that box of rings, and ask him to pick out his."

Why he was Dirty.

Benevolent Lady: "I can pity your hunger, my poor man, and I am willing to relieve your wants, but why do you keep yourself so dirty? There is plenty of water about." Tramp: "Fact is, marm, my physician told me to take a bath two hours after my meals, and I ain't had a meal for a fortnight, and—thank you kindly, marm."

A Hero's Death.

Inspector: "Now, boys, can any of you tell me the names of any Englishmen who have died whilst bravely doing their duty?" First Boy: "General Gordon, sir." Inspector: "Very good, my boy, but" (looking round the classroom) "surely he was not the only one." Second Boy: "My father, sir." Inspector: "Oh, indeed, what was he?" Second Boy (proudly): "A referee at football matches, sir."

No Desire to Corrupt.

Old Tightpurse: "Mr. Timmings, is it true that you remarked at a recent meeting of the Young Men's Society that 'Money is a curse and the root of all evil'?" Mr. Timmings (his employé): "Yes, sir." Old Tightpurse: "That being the case, Mr. Timmings, and your views on the subject being so sincere, I have no desire to pervert your noble nature by forcing you to take the rise of salary I had intended giving you. Good morning."

Bringing the Wick Up.

The other day a lady in the West-end sent her servant to light the gas. Being a long time gone, she went to find her. She found her in the hall on top of a pair of steps picking the burner with a pin. "What on earth are you doing?" asked the lady. "Shure, Oi'm bringing the wick up," was the reply. On being told that there was no wick, and all that was required was a lighted match, she replied: "Go 'long wid yer! Oi may look a bit ignorant, but, begorra, Oi'm not so silly as to put a loight to a piece of cold iron!"

The Poor Martyr!

"The time has come," said Mr. M'Brick's wife, "when woman may forsake the light, ephemeral things of life and take up the heavy subjects." And her husband rejoined, wearily: "Are you going to make bread at home again, Maria?"

They Were Too Quiet.

Visitor: "How do you like your new neighbours?" Little Boy: "I don't like them at all. They're too quiet." Visitor: "Too quiet?" Little Boy: "Yes'm. Mamma makes me keep still all the time, so that she can hear what they're doing."

One Way of Doing It.

Sweet Girl: "Papa, I wish you'd lock up your money and pretend to fail; there's a good old dear. It needn't last more than a week or two, and there are so many failures now no one will find fault." Father: "Of all things! Wha——" Sweet Girl: "Oh, it's all right. You see, I'm engaged to nine young men, and I've got to get rid of at least eight of them, somehow."

All He Got.

"I never robbed a man but once," said the honest tramp, "and then I was starving. He would not give me a penny, and I couldn't stand the gnawing in my stomach any longer. So I knocked him down and went through his pockets. What kind of a haul did I make? Just one little bottle which read on the label: 'Pepsin'; for that full feeling after eating.'"

A Triumph of Art.

"There is one very dramatic situation in my new play. It is where the mortgage on the old farm is foreclosed and the hero can't pay it off." "Does it affect the audience very much?" "Oh, my! Why, last night a millionaire in one of the boxes was so affected that he wrote out a cheque for £5,000, and sent it up to pay off the mortgage and get the hero out of difficulties."

Didn't Want the Spring.

A London exquisite, having become agriculturally ambitious, went into the country in search of a farm, and, finding one for sale, began to bargain for it. The seller mentioned, as one of the farm's recommendations, that it had a very cold spring on it. "Ah, aw!" said the fop, "I won't take it, then, for I've heard that a cold spring ruined the crops last year, and I don't want a place with such a drawback upon it."

"Having" the Policeman.

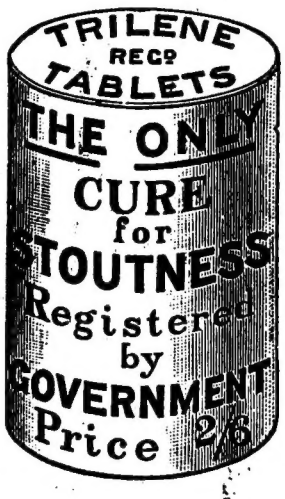
A police-inspector, being informed that a restaurateur was serving game out of season, visits the restaurant in plain clothes and orders dinner. "Waiter, pheasant for one." The inspector finishes his dinner leisurely, and then says to the waiter: "Ask the governor to step this way a minute, if you please." "What for?" "I wish to notify him to appear in court to-morrow and answer for selling pheasant out of season. I am the police-inspector, and have secured the necessary evidence against him." "It wasn't pheasant you had." Police-inspector (uneasily): "It wasn't pheasant? What was it, then?" Waiter (cheerfully): "Crow."

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

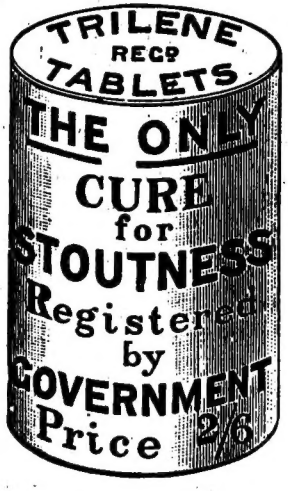
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORF", of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 11lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Bisebolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 13st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lance., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 12st. 6lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 63 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago: they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

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A Friend's Recommendation is the Best Testimonial.

YOU will not have far to go before finding a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour who can tell you from personal experience that **BEECHAM'S PILLS** are the most efficacious medicine yet known for the cure of all forms of

INDIGESTION, BILIOUS DISORDERS,
SICK HEADACHE, POORNESS OF BLOOD,
NERVOUS DEBILITY,
AND GENERAL WANT OF TONE.

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have realised the immense benefits derived from their use, and have recommended them to their friends.

There is no denying this fact, for a man is not likely to be gulled a second time, and every dissatisfied purchaser does ten times more harm to the reputation of any specific than one satisfied does good.

But notwithstanding the gigantic sale of over **SIX MILLION BOXES PER ANNUM,** there are still thousands of sufferers who are spoiling their lives, and possibly ruining their health, with experiments, while the old-established remedy, **BEECHAM'S PILLS,** remains still untried. Note the axiom on the top of this page—"A friend's recommendation is the best testimonial"—and remember that in the case of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** this is an easy thing to obtain.

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